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CONTENTS.

CONTINUATION OF PART SECOND.

OF LITERATURE AND THE ARTS.

CHAP. XV. *Of the Dramatic Art* . Page 1
CHAP. XVI. *Of the Dramas of Lessing* . 21
CHAP. XVII. *The Robbers, and Don Carlos of Schiller* 32
CHAP. XVIII. *Walstein and Mary Stuart* . 51
CHAP. XIX. *Joan of Arc, and the Bride of Messina* 97
CHAP. XX. *William Tell* . . 124
CHAP. XXI. *Goetz of Berlichingen, and the Count of Egmont* 138
CHAP. XXII. *Iphigenia in Tauris, Torquato Tasso, &c. &c.* 163
CHAP. XXIII. *Faustus* . . 181
CHAP. XXIV. *Luther, Attila, The Sons of the Valley, The Cross on the Baltic, The Twenty-Fourth of February, by Werner* . 227
CHAP. XXV. *Various Pieces of the German and Danish Theatre* . . 251
CHAP. XXVI. *Of Comedy* . . 271
CHAP. XXVII. *Of Declamation* . . 292
CHAP. XXVIII. *Of Novels* . . . 319
CHAP. XXIX. *Of German Historians, and of J. de Müller in particular* . . 351

CHAP. XXX. *Herder* . . Page 364
CHAP. XXXI. *Of the Literary Treasures of Germany, and of its most renowned Critics, A. W. and F. Schlegel* . . 370
CHAP. XXXII. *Of the Fine Arts of Germany* 389

PART THE SECOND,

CONTINUED.

OF LITERATURE AND THE ARTS.

CHAPTER XV.

Of the Dramatic Art.

THE theatre exercises a powerful influence over men: a tragedy which exalts the soul, a comedy which paints manners and characters, acts upon the mind of the people almost like a real event; but in order to obtain any

considerable success upon the stage, it is necessary for the poet to have studied the public which he addresses, and the motives, of every description, on which its opinion is founded. The knowledge of mankind is even equally essential to the dramatic author with imagination itself; he must touch sentiments of general interest without losing sight of the particular relations which influence his spectators; a theatrical performance is literature in action, and the genius which it demands is so rare only because it exhibits the astonishing combination of the perfect knowledge of circumstances with poetical inspiration. Nothing then would be more absurd than an attempt to impose on all nations the same dramatic system; when the object is to adapt an universal art to the taste of each particular country, an immortal art to the manners of the passing moment, most important modifications are unavoidable; and from thence proceeds such a diversity of opinions as to what constitutes dramatic talent: in all other branches of literature men agree more easily.

It cannot, I think, be denied, that the French are the most expert nation in the

world in the combination of theatrical effects; they bear away the prize from all others, likewise, in the dignity of situations and of tragic style. But, even while we acknowledge this double superiority, we may sustain more powerful emotions from less regular works; the conception is often more bold and striking in the foreign drama, and often comprehends I know not what power within itself which speaks more intimately to our heart, and touches more nearly those sentiments by which we have been personally affected.

As the French are easily tired, so they avoid prolixity in every thing. When the German attends the theatre, he, in general, sacrifices only a dull game at cards, the monotonous chances of which hardly serve to fill the vacant hour; he asks then nothing more than to seat himself peaceably at the play, and grants the author all the time that he wants to prepare his events and develope his characters; the impatience of the Frenchman would never tolerate such delay.

The German dramas usually resemble the works of the ancient painters: their physiognomies are fine, expressive, meditative; but all

the figures are on the same plane, sometimes confused, sometimes placed, the one by the side of the other, as in bas-reliefs, without being grouped together before the eyes of the spectator. The French think, and with reason, that the theatre, like painting, ought to be subjected to the laws of perspective. If the Germans were expert in the dramatic art, they would be equally so in all the rest; but they are in every thing incapable of address, even innocent; their understanding is penetrating in a straight line; the fine and impressive of a positive kind are subject to their dominion; but relative beauties, those which depend on the knowledge of cause and effect and the rapidity of expedients, are, generally speaking, beyond the reach of their faculties.

It is singular, that, of the two people, the French are those who exact the most sustained gravity in the tone of tragedy; but it is precisely because the French are more accessible to pleasantry that they refuse to admit it, while nothing deranges the imperturbable seriousness of the Germans: it is always by its general effect that they judge of a theatrical piece, and they wait till it is finished before they either condemn or applaud it.

The impressions of the French are more ready; and they would in vain be forewarned that a comic scene is designed to set off a tragic situation,—they would turn the first into ridicule without waiting for the other; every detail must for them be of equal interest with the whole: they will not allow credit for an instant to the pleasure which they demand from the fine arts.

The difference between the French and the German theatre may be explained by reference to the national characters; but to these natural diversities must be added some points of systematic opposition, of which it is important to ascertain the cause. What I have said already on the subjects of classical and romantic poetry, is also applicable to the theatre. The tragedies of mythological foundation are of a distinct nature from the historical; subjects drawn from fable were so well known, the interest which they inspired so universal, that it was enough to announce them, to strike the imagination at once. That which is eminently poetical in the Greek tragedies, the intervention of the gods and the action of fatality, renders their progress more easy; the detail of motives, the development

of characters, the diversity of facts, become less necessary when the event is explained by supernatural power; every thing is cut short by a miracle. The action, too, of the Greek tragedy is astonishingly simple; the greater part of the events are foreseen and even announced at the first opening; a Greek tragedy is, in short, no other than a religious ceremony. The spectacle was presented in honour of the Gods; and in hymns, interrupted by dialogue and recitation, were painted sometimes merciful, sometimes avenging, deities, but always Destiny hovering over the life of man. When these same subjects were transferred to the French theatre, our great poets bestowed upon them more of variety; they multiplied incidents, contrived surprises, and drew closer the knot. It was necessary in some sort to supply the want of that national and religious interest which the Greeks felt and we cannot experience; yet, not content with adding circumstances to the simplicity of the Greek action, we have lent to their personages our own manners and sentiments, our modern conduct and modern gallantry; and it is on that account, that so great a number of foreigners are unable to conceive the admi-

ration with which our chefs d'œuvre inspire us. In fact, when they are heard in another language, stripped of the magic beauty of style, one is surprised at the little emotion they produce, and the inconsistencies they display; for that which accords neither with the age nor with the national manners of the personages represented, what is it but inconsistency? Is nothing ridiculous but that which is unlike ourselves?

Those pieces of which the subjects are derived from Greece lose nothing by the severity of our dramatic rules; but, would we taste, like the English, the pleasure of possessing an historical theatre, of being interested by our recollections, or touched by our religious feelings, how would it be possible rigidly to conform at once to the three unities, and to that sort of pomp which is become a law of our tragic poetry?

The question of the three unities is one which has been so often agitated, that one hardly dares at present to talk of it; but, of all the three, there is but one of importance, the unity of action, and the others can never be considered but as subordinate to that. Now if the truth of the action is resigned to the puerile necessity of keeping the scene un-

changed, and confining it to the space of twenty-four hours, to impose such necessity, is to subject the Genius of the Drama to a torture similar to that of Acrostics, a torture which sacrifices the substance to the form.

Of all our great tragic poets, Voltaire has most frequently treated modern subjects. To excite emotion, he has drawn his resources from religion and chivalry, and whoever is sincere must, I think, allow that Alzire, Zaïre, and Tancrède, cause more tears to flow than all the Greek and Roman chefs d'œuvre of our stage. Dubelloy, with a talent very inferior, has nevertheless attained to the art of awakening French recollections in a French theatre; and, even though he could not write, his pieces make one feel an interest similar to that which the Greeks must have experienced when they saw their own historical deeds represented before their eyes. What an advantage may not genius derive from such a disposition? And yet there are hardly any events of our æra, of which the action can be comprised in one day, or in the same place; the diversity of facts which is superinduced by a more complicated social order, the delicacies of sentiment which are inspired by a more

tender religion; in short, the truth of manner which must be observed in pictures more nearly resembling ourselves, require a greater latitude in dramatic composition.

A recent example may be cited, of the difficulty of conforming, in subjects drawn from modern history, to our dramatic orthodoxy. The "Templiers" of M. Renouard is certainly one of the pieces most deserving of praise that have appeared for a great length of time; yet what is more strange than the necessity which the author has imagined himself under of representing the whole order of Templars as accused, judged, condemned, and burned, in the space of twenty-four hours! The revolutionary tribunals were expeditious; but whatever might have been their atrocious inclination, they never were able to proceed so rapidly as a French tragedy. I might point out the inconvenience attending the unity of time not less demonstrably in almost all our tragedies taken from modern history; but I have chosen the most remarkable only, in order to make these inconveniences the more conspicuous.

One of the most sublime expressions ever heard on the stage occurs in this noble tra-

gedy. In the last scene it is related that the Templars are singing psalms at the stake; a messenger is sent to convey to them the pardon which the king had resolved to bestow,

"Mais il n'étoit plus temps, les chants avaient cessé."

"It was too late—the holy song had ceased."

It is thus the poet gives us to understand that these generous martyrs have just perished in the flames. In what pagan tragedy can be found the expression of such a sentiment? And why should the French be deprived at their theatre of all that is truly in harmony with themselves, their ancestors, and their belief?

The French consider the unity of time and place as an indispensable condition of theatrical illusion; foreigners make this illusion consist in the delineation of characters, in the truth of language, and the exact observation of the manners of the age and country which they design to paint. We must properly understand the meaning of this expression, Illusion, when applied to the arts. Since we consent to believe that actors separated from ourselves by a few boards are Greek heroes dead three thousand years ago, it is very certain that what we call illusion is not the imagination,

that what we behold really exists; a tragedy can only appear to us with the form of truth by means of the emotion which it inspires. Now if, according to the nature of the circumstances represented, the change of place and the supposed prolongation of time add to this emotion, the illusion thereby becomes the more lively.

It is complained that the finest tragedies of Voltaire, Zaïre, and Tancrède, are founded on misunderstandings; but how do otherwise than have recourse to the means of intrigue, when the developments are considered as taking effect in so short a space! The dramatic art then becomes a difficulty worth vanquishing; and to make the greatest events pass naturally through so many obstacles, requires a dexterity similar to that of jugglers who cause the objects which they present to the spectator to vanish from his sight.

Historical subjects accommodate themselves still less than those of invention to the conditions imposed upon our writers; that tragic etiquette which is thought necessary on our theatre is frequently opposed to the new beauties of which pieces taken from modern history would be susceptible.

There is in the manners of chivalry a simplicity of language, a naïveté of sentiment, full of charms; but neither those charms, nor that pathos which results from the contrast of common circumstances with strong impressions, can be admitted into our tragedies: they require, throughout, dignified situations; and, yet, the picturesque interest of the middle ages is entirely owing to that diversity of scenes and characters, from which the romances of the troubadours have drawn effects so touching.

The pomp of Alexandrines is a still greater obstacle than even the routine of good taste, to any change in the form and substance of the French tragedies: it cannot be said in an Alexandrine verse that one comes in or goes out, that one sleeps or wakes, without seeking some poetical turn by which to express it; and numberless sentiments and effects are banished from the theatre, not by the rules of tragedy, but by the very exigencies of the verse. Racine is the only French writer who, in the scene between Joas and Athalie, has once ventured to sport with these difficulties; he has managed to give a simplicity equally noble and natural to the language of a child:

but this admirable effort of an unparallelled genius does not prevent the multiplication of artificial difficulties from being too frequently an obstacle to the most happy inventions.

M. Benj. Constant, in the so justly admired preface to his tragedy of "Walstein," has remarked that the Germans painted characters, the French only passions, in their dramatic pieces. To delineate characters, it is necessary to abandon the majestic tone which is exclusively admitted into French tragedy; for it is impossible to make known the faults and qualities of a man, but by presenting him under different aspects; in nature, the vulgar often mixes with the sublime, and sometimes relieves its effect: in short, the true action of a character cannot be represented but in a space of time somewhat considerable, and in twenty-four hours there is no room for any thing but a catastrophe. It will, perhaps, be contended, that catastrophes are more suitable to the theatre than the minute shades of character; the emotion excited by lively passions pleases the greater part of the spectators more than the attention required for the observation of the human heart. The national taste alone can decide upon these different

dramatic systems; but it is justice to acknowledge, that if foreigners have a different conception of the theatrical art from ourselves, it is neither through ignorance nor barbarism, but in consequence of profound reflections which are worthy of being examined.

Shakspeare, whom they choose to call a barbarian, has, perhaps, too philosophical a spirit, too subtle a penetration, for the instantaneous perception of the theatre; he judges characters with the impartiality of a superior being, and sometimes represents them with an irony almost Machiavelian; his compositions have so much depth that the rapidity of theatrical action makes us lose a great part of the ideas which they contain: in this respect his pieces deserve more to be read than to be seen. By the very force of his imagination Shakspeare often suffers his action to grow cool, and the French understand much better how to paint their characters as well as their decorations with those striking colours which produce effect at a distance. What! will they say, can Shakspeare be reproached with having too much nicety in his perceptions, he who has indulged himself in situations so terrible? Shakspeare often reunites qualities, and even

faults, that are contrary to each other; he is sometimes within, sometimes without, the sphere of art; but he possesses the knowledge of the human heart even more than that of the theatre.

In their dramas, their comic operas, and their comedies, the French evince a sagacity and a grace which only themselves possess in the same degree; and, from one end of Europe to the other, they perform scarcely any thing but translations of French pieces: but it is not the same with their tragedies. As the severe rules to which they are subjected occasion their being all more or less confined within the same circle, the perfection of style is indispensable to the admiration which they are calculated to inspire. If any innovation on the rules of tragedy were risqued in France, all the world would immediately cry out, a melo-drame! But is it a matter of no importance whatever to ascertain what it is that causes so many people to be pleased with melo-drames? In England, all classes are equally attracted by the pieces of Shakspeare. Our finest tragedies, in France, do not interest the people: under the pretence of a taste too pure and a sentiment too refined to support

certain emotions, the art is divided into two branches; the worst plays contain the most touching situations, ill expressed, and the finest paint with admirable skill situations often cold, because they are dignified: we possess few tragedies capable of exciting at the same time the imaginations of all ranks of society.

These observations are not intended to convey the slightest blame against our great masters. In the foreign dramas there are scenes which produce more lively impressions, but nothing to be compared to the imposing and well combined general effect of our dramatic chefs d'œuvre: the point is only to know whether, in being confined, as at present, to the imitation of these chefs d'œuvre, we shall ever produce any new ones. Nothing in life ought to be stationary; and art is petrified when it refuses to change. Twenty years of revolution have given to the imagination other wants than those which it experienced when the romances of Crébillon painted the love and the manners of the age. Greek subjects are exhausted; one man only, Le Mercier, has been able to reap new glory from an ancient subject, Agamemnon;

but the taste of the age naturally inclines to historical tragedy.

Every thing is tragic in the events by which nations are interested; and this immense drama, which the human race has for these six thousand years past been performing, would furnish innumerable subjects for the theatre, if more freedom were allowed to the dramatic art. Rules are but the itinerary of genius; they only teach us that Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire, have passed that way; but provided we arrive at the same end, why cavil about the road? And is not the end that of moving, at the same time that we ennoble, the soul?

Curiosity is one of the great excitements of the theatre; but the only inexhaustible interest is that which is inspired by deep affection. We love that species of poetry which discovers man to man; we love to see how a creature like ourselves combats with suffering, sinks under it, triumphs over it, is rendered subject, or rises superior, to the power of fate. In some of our tragedies we find situations equally violent with those of the English and German; but these situations are not represented in all their force; and

their effect is sometimes softened, or even altogether effaced, by affectation. Our authors seldom depart from a sort of conventional nature which clothes in its own colours ancient manners with the resemblance of those of modern times; vice with that of virtue, assassination with that of gallantry. This nature is beautiful and adorned with care, but she fatigues us in the end; and the desire of plunging into deeper mysteries must obtain invincible possession of genius.

It is much to be desired, then, that we could overleap the barriers with which this art is surrounded by the law of rhymes and hemistichs; we should allow greater boldness, and exact a more intimate acquaintance with history: for, if we confine ourselves exclusively to these every-day fainter impressions of the same great productions of genius, we shall at last see upon the stage nothing but so many heroic puppets, sacrificing love to duty, preferring death to slavery, inspired by antithesis in actions as in words, but without any resemblance to that astonishing creature which is called man, or any relation to that fearful destiny which by turns impels and pursues him.

The defects of the German theatre are obvious: every thing that looks like want of acquaintance with the world, whether in art or in society, immediately strikes the most superficial observer; but, to feel the beauties which come from the soul, it is necessary to appreciate the works that are presented to us with a sort of candour which is altogether consistent with the highest superiority of mind. Ridicule is often only a vulgar sentiment translated into impertinence. The faculty of perceiving and admiring real greatness through all the faults of bad taste in literature, as through all the inconsistencies with which it is sometimes surrounded in the conduct of life, is the only faculty that does honour to the critic.

In bringing my readers acquainted with a theatre founded on principles so different from our own, I certainly do not pretend that these principles are better, still less that they ought to be adopted in France: but foreign combinations may excite new ideas; and when we see with what sterility our literature is threatened, it seems to me difficult not to desire that our writers may enlarge a little the limits of the course: would they not do

well to become conquerors, in their turn, in the empire of the imagination? It would cost the French but little to follow such advice.

CHAPTER XVI.

Of the Dramas of Lessing.

THE German theatre did not exist before Lessing; they performed only translations and imitations of foreign dramas. The theatre requires, even more than any other branch of literature, a capital, a centre of union for the resources of wealth and of the arts; in Germany every thing is scattered abroad. In one town they have actors, in another, authors, in a third, spectators; and no where a focus in which to collect them together. Lessing exerted the natural activity of his character in giving a national theatre to his countrymen, and he wrote a journal entitled, "La Dramaturgie," in which he examined most of the pieces translated from the French, which were then acted in Germany: the correctness of thought which he displays in his criticisms, evinces even more of a philosophical spirit than knowledge of the art. Lessing

generally thought like Diderot on the subject of dramatic poetry. He believed that the strict regularity of the French tragedies was an obstacle to the adoption of a great many simple and affecting subjects, and that it was necessary to invent new dramas to supply the want of them. But Diderot, in his dramas, substituted the affectation of simplicity in the room of a more usual affectation, while the genius of Lessing is really simple and sincere. He was the first to give to the Germans the honourable impulse of following their own genius in their theatrical works. The originality of his character shews itself in his dramas: yet are they subjected to the same principles as ours; their form has nothing in it peculiar, and though he troubled himself little about the unity of time and place, he did not rise, like Goëthe and Schiller, to the conception of a new system. "Minna of Barnhelm," "Emilia Galotti," and "Nathan the Sage," are the most worthy to be cited of all the works of Lessing.

An officer of noble character, after having received many wounds in the army, finds his honour on a sudden threatened by an unjust prosecution: he will not discover to the

woman he loves, and by whom he is loved, the attachment he has for her, being determined not to make her a partaker in his misfortune by marrying her. This is all the subject of "Minna of Barnhelm." With means so simple, Lessing has contrived to produce a considerable interest; the dialogue is full of spirit and attraction, the style very pure, and every character so well displayed, that the slightest shades of their several impressions create that sort of interest that is inspired by the confidence of a friend. The character of an old serjeant, devoted with his whole soul to a young officer who is the object of persecution, affords a happy mixture of gaiety and sentiment; this sort of character always succeeds on the stage; gaiety is the more pleasing when we know that it does not proceed from insensibility, and sentiment more natural when it displays itself only at intervals. In the same piece we have the part of a French adventurer, in which the author has altogether failed; one should have a light hand to touch the ridiculous part of a Frenchman's character; and most foreigners have daubed it with coarse colours, which present nothing that is either delicate or striking.

"Emilia Galotti," is only the story of Virginia invested with modern circumstances, and thrown into private life; its sentiments are too strong for the situation, its action too important to be attributed to an unknown character. Lessing felt, no doubt, a republican spleen against courtiers, which he has gratified in drawing the portrait of one who assists his master in dishonouring a young and innocent girl; this courtier, Martinelli, is almost too vile for probability, and the traits of his baseness are destitute of originality: we perceive that Lessing has represented him thus with a hostile intent, and nothing injures the beauty of a fiction so much, as the appearance of any design which has not that beauty for its object. The character of the prince is treated with greater nicety: that union of tumultuous passions with inconstancy of mind, so fatal in a person invested with power, is perceivable in all his conduct; an aged minister brings him papers, among which is a death-sentence: in his impatience to visit the object of his affections, the prince is about to sign, without having looked at it; the minister avails himself of a pretext to withdraw it, shuddering as he perceives the

exercise of such power combined with such want of reflexion. The part of the Countess Orsina, a young mistress of the prince, whom he abandons for Emilia, is drawn with the greatest genius; a mixture of frivolity and violence, which we may well expect to find in a young Italian attached to a court. This woman shews us what society has produced, and what that same society has not been able to destroy; the natural character of the South, combined with all that is most factitious in the manners of the great world, and the singular assemblage of haughtiness in vice and vanity in sentiment. Such a picture cannot present itself in our rules of verse, or in our established laws of dramatic poetry, yet is it not the less essentially tragic.

The scene in which the princess Orsina excites Emilia's father to kill the prince, in order to save his daughter from the disgrace which threatens her, is one of the greatest beauty; there we see virtue armed by vice, and passion suggesting all that the most rigorous austerity could dictate to inflame the jealous honour of an old man; it is the human heart presented in a new situation, and it is in this that true dramatic genius

consists. The old man takes the poniard; and being prevented from assassinating the prince, he uses it for the sacrifice of his daughter. Orsina is the ignorant author of this terrible action; it was she who engraved her transitory fury on a mind of deep sensibility; and the senseless ravings of her guilty passion proved the cause of shedding innocent blood.

One remarks, in the principal characters of Lessing, a certain family likeness which leads one to imagine that he has painted himself in several of his personages; Major Tellheim in Minna, Odoard, the father of Emilia, and the Templar in Nathan, all three are endued with a proud sensibility of a misanthropic cast.

The finest of the works of Lessing is "Nathan the Sage;" There is no dramatic piece in which we see the principles of religious toleration brought into action with more ease and dignity. A Turk, a Templar, and a Jew, are the principal characters of this play; the idea is taken from the story of the three rings in Boccaccio, but the conduct of the piece is entirely Lessing's own. The Turk is Sultan Saladin, who is represented, according to history,

as a man of a truly great mind; the young Templar has in his character all the severity of the religious state to which he has consecrated himself; and the Jew is an old man, who has acquired a large fortune by trade, but whose liberal habits are the result of his extensive knowledge and natural benevolence. He comprehends in one sentiment all the modes of sincere belief, and sees the Divinity itself in the heart of every virtuous man.

This is a character of admirable simplicity. One is astonished at the emotion which it excites, although not agitated by lively passions or powerful circumstances. Once, nevertheless, they attempt to tear away from Nathan a young girl to whom he had acted the part of a father, and whom he had carefully watched from the hour of her birth: the pain of separating himself from her would be bitter to him; and to defend himself against the injustice which would ravish her from him, he relates in what manner she had fallen into his hands.

The Christians immolated all the Jews at Gaza, and Nathan beheld his wife and seven children perish in a single night; he passed three days prostrate in the dust, swearing

implacable hatred to the Christian name; by little and little his reason returned, and he cried, "Yet there is a God, his will be done!" At this moment a priest came to beg him to take care of a Christian infant, an orphan from the cradle, and the old Jew adopted it. The emotion of Nathan in making this recital is the more pathetic, as he endeavours to restrain it, and the shame of old age makes him wish to hide what he feels. His sublime patience does not fail, though attacked in his belief and in his pride, by their accusing him, as a crime, of having educated Reca in the Jewish religion; and his justification has no other end, than to procure him the right of continuing to do good to the child whom chance bestowed upon him.

The play of Nathan is yet more attractive by the delineation of character, than by its situations. The Templar has something of ferocious in his disposition which arises from the fear of being susceptible of tenderness. The oriental prodigality of Saladin is opposed to the generous economy of Nathan. The Sultan's treasurer, an old austere Dervise, informs him that his revenues are exhausted by his bounties.—"I am sorry for it," says

Saladin, "because I shall be forced to retrench my donations: for myself, I shall still retain that which has always constituted the whole of my fortune, a horse, a sword, and one only God.—Nathan is a philanthropist; but the disgrace which the Jewish name has attached to him in society, mixes a sort of contempt for human nature with the expression of his benevolence. Every scene adds some lively and striking features to the development of these several personages; but their relations to each other are not close enough to excite any very powerful emotion.

At the conclusion of the piece it is discovered that the Templar and the girl adopted by the Jew are brother and sister, and that the Sultan is their uncle. The author's intention has evidently been to give an example, in his dramatic family, of the most extended religious fraternity. The philosophical end to which the whole piece is made to contribute, diminishes its theatrical interest: it is almost impossible to avoid a certain degree of coldness in a drama, of which the object is to develope a general idea, however fine it may be; it resembles a mere moral apologue; and one is apt to say that the persons of the

drama are there, not on their own account, but to contribute to the advancement of knowledge. It is true that there is no fictitious nor even real event from which some reflection may not be derived; but the event ought to lead the reflection, and not the reflection give birth to the event: Imagination, in the fine arts, ought always to be the first in action.

Since Lessing, there have appeared an infinite number of German Dramas; at last people begin to get tired of them. The mixed species of drama was introduced only by reason of the constraint which is imposed by tragedy: it is a sort of contraband in art; but when entire freedom is allowed, one no longer feels the necessity of having recourse to the drama for the use of simple and natural circumstances. The drama, then, would preserve only one advantage, that of painting, in the manner of romances, the situations of our own lives, the manners of the times in which we live; yet, when we hear only unknown names pronounced on the stage, we lose one of the greatest pleasures that tragedy can confer, the historical recollections which it traces. We expect to find more interest in the piece, because it represents to

us what we are in the daily habit of seeing; forgetting that an imitation too near the truth, is not what one looks for in the fine arts. The drama is to tragedy what waxen images are to statues; there is too much truth, and not enough of the ideal; too much, if we consider it in the light of art, yet not enough to render it nature.

Lessing can never be reckoned a dramatic author of the first order; he attended to too many different objects to acquire great skill in any department whatever. Genius is universal; but a natural aptitude to one of the fine arts is necessarily exclusive. Lessing was, above all, a dialectician of the first eminence; which is an obstacle to dramatic eloquence; for sentiment disdains transitions, gradations and motives; it is a continual and spontaneous inspiration which cannot render any account of itself. Lessing was, no doubt, far from the dryness of philosophy; yet he had more of vivacity than of sensibility in his character; dramatic genius is of a more capricious, a more sombre, a more unpremeditated cast than suits a man who has devoted the greatest part of his life to the art of reasoning.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Robbers, and Don Carlos of Schiller.

SCHILLER, in his earliest youth, possessed a fervour of genius, a kind of intoxication of sentiment, which misguided him. The "Conspiracy of Fiesco," "Intrigue and Love," and, lastly, "The Robbers," all which have been performed at the French theatre, are works which the principles of art, as well as those of morality, may condemn; but from the age of five and twenty, his writings were pure and severe. The education of life depraves the frivolous, but perfects the reflecting mind.

"The Robbers" has been translated into French, but greatly altered; at first they omitted to take advantage of the date, which affixes an historical interest to the piece. The scene is placed in the fifteenth century, at the moment when the edict of perpetual peace, by which all private challenges were forbidden,

was published in the empire. This edict was no doubt productive of great advantage to the repose of Germany; but the young men of birth, accustomed to live in the midst of dangers, and rely upon their personal strength, fancied that they fell into a sort of shameful inertness when they subjected themselves to the authority of the laws. Nothing was more absurd than this conception; yet, as men are generally governed by custom, it is natural to be repugnant even to the best of changes, only because it is a change. Schiller's Captain of the Robbers is less odious than if he were placed in the present times, for there was little difference between the feudal anarchy under which he lived, and the bandit life which he adopted; but it is precisely the kind of excuse which the author affords him, that renders his piece the more dangerous. It has produced, it must be allowed, a bad effect in Germany. Young men, enthusiastic admirers of the character and mode of living of the Captain of the Robbers, have tried to imitate him.

Their taste for a licentious life they honoured with the name of the love of liberty, and fancied themselves to be indignant against

the abuses of social order, when they were only tired of their own private condition. Their essays in rebellion were merely ridiculous, yet have tragedies and romances more importance in Germany than in any other country. Every thing there is done seriously; and the lot of life is influenced by the reading such a work, or the seeing such a performance. What is admired as art, must be introduced into real existence. Werther has occasioned more suicides than the finest woman in the world; and poetry, philosophy, in short all the ideal, have often more command over the Germans, than nature and the passions themselves.

The subject of "The Robbers" is the same with that of so many other fictions, all founded originally on the parable of the Prodigal. There is a hypocritical son, who conducts himself well in outward appearance, and a culpable son, who possesses good feelings among all his faults. This contrast is very fine in a religious point of view; because it bears witness to us that God reads our hearts; but is nevertheless objectionable in inspiring too much interest in favour of a son who has deserted his father's house. It teaches young

people with bad heads, universally to boast of the goodness of their hearts, although nothing is more absurd than for men to attribute to themselves virtues, only because they have defects; this negative pledge is very uncertain, since it never can follow from their wanting reason that they are possessed of sensibility: madness is often only an impetuous excess of self-love.

The character of the hypocritical son, such as Schiller has represented him, is much too odious. It is one of the faults of very young writers, to sketch with too hasty a pencil; the gradual shades in painting are taken for timidity of character, when, in fact, they constitute a proof of the maturity of talent. If the personages of the second rank are not painted with sufficient exactness, the passions of the chief of the robbers are admirably expressed. The energy of this character manifests itself by turns in incredulity, religion, love, and cruelty; having been unable to find a place where to fix himself in his proper rank, he makes to himself an opening through the commission of crime; existence is for him a sort of delirium, heightened sometimes by rage, and sometimes by remorse.

The love scenes between the young girl and the chief of the robbers, who was to have been her husband, are admirable in point of enthusiasm and sensibility; there are few situations more pathetic than that of this perfectly virtuous woman, always attached from the bottom of her soul to him whom she loved before he became criminal. The respect which a woman is accustomed to feel for the man she loves, is changed into a sort of terror and of pity; and one would say that the unfortunate female flatters herself with the thought of becoming the guardian angel of her guilty lover, in heaven, now, when she can never more hope to be the happy companion of his pilgrimage on earth.

Schiller's play cannot be fairly appreciated by the French translation. In this, they have preserved only what may be called the pantomime of action; the originality of the characters has vanished, and it is that alone which can give life to fiction; the finest tragedies would degenerate into melo-drames, when stripped of the animated colouring of sentiments and passions. The force of events is not enough to unite the spectator with the persons represented; let them love, or let

them kill one another, it is all the same to us, if the author has failed of exciting our sympathies in their favour.

Don Carlos is also a work of Schiller's youth, and yet it is considered as a composition of the highest rank. The subject of this play is one of the most dramatic that history presents to us. A young princess, daughter of Henry the Second, takes leave of France and of the brilliant and chivalrous court of her father to unite herself to an old tyrant, so gloomy and so severe, that even the Spanish character itself was altered by his government, and the whole nation for a long time afterwards bore the impression of its master. Don Carlos, at first betrothed to Elizabeth, continues to love her though she has become his stepmother. Those great political events, the Reformation, and the Revolt of the Low Countries, are intermingled with the tragic catastrophe of the condemnation of the son by the father: the interests of individuals and of the public, in their highest possible degrees, are united in this tragedy. Many writers have treated this subject in France, but under the ancient regime, its representation on the stage was prohibited;

it was thought deficient in respect to the Spanish nation to represent this fact in their history. M. d'Aranda, that Spanish ambassador, remarkable by so many features which prove the strength of his character and the narrowness of his intellect, was asked permission for the performance of the tragedy of Don Carlos, just finished by its author, who expected great glory from its representation; "Why does he not take another subject?" answered M. d'Aranda.—"*M. l'Ambassadeur,*" said they to him, "consider that the piece is finished, and that the author has devoted to it three years of his life."—"*Mais, mon Dieu!*" returned the ambassador, "is there no other event in all history, but this? Let him choose another." They never could drive him out of this ingenious mode of reasoning, which was supported by a firm resolution.

Historical subjects exercise the genius in an entirely different manner from that in which it is exercised by subjects of invention; yet it requires, perhaps, even more imagination to represent historical fact in a tragedy, than to create situations and personages at will. To alter facts essentially in

transferring them to the theatre, is always sure to produce a disagreeable impression; we expect truth; and we are painfully surprised when the author substitutes in the room of it any fiction which it may have pleased him to adopt: nevertheless, history requires to be combined in an artist-like manner, in order to produce its effect on the stage, and we must have at once united in tragedy, the talent of painting the truth, and that of rendering it poetical. Difficulties of another nature present themselves when the dramatic art embraces the wide field of invention; it may be said to be then more at liberty, yet nothing is more rare than the power of characterizing unknown personages in such a manner as to give them the consistency of names already illustrious. Lear, Othello, Orosmane, Tancrède, have received immortality at the hands of Shakspeare and Voltaire, without having ever existed; still, however, subjects of invention are, generally speaking, dangerous to the poet, through that very independence which they confer upon him. Historical subjects seem to impose restraint; but when the writer avails himself properly of that support which may be

derived from certain fixed limits, the career which they prescribe, and the flights which they permit, even these very limits are favourable to genius. The fidelity of poetry gives a relief to truth, as the sun's ray to colours, and restores to events which it graces the lustre which antiquity had obscured.

The preference is given in Germany to those historical tragedies in which art displays itself, like *the prophet of the past.** The author who means to compose such a work as this, must transport himself altogether to the age and manners of the personages represented, and an anachronism in sentiments and ideas is more justly obnoxious to the severity of criticism than in dates.

It is upon these principles that some persons have blamed Schiller for having invented the character of the Marquis de Posa, a noble Spaniard, a partizan of liberty and of toleration, passionately zealous in favour of all the new ideas which then began to ferment in Europe. I imagine that Schiller may be justly reproached with having made the Marquis de Posa the channel for the com-

* An expression of Frederic Schlegel, on the penetration of a great historian.

munication of his own private opinions; but it is not, as is pretended, the philosophical spirit of the eighteenth century that is attributed to him. The Marquis de Posa, such as Schiller has painted him, is a German enthusiast; and this character is so foreign to our own times, that we may as well conceive him a personage of the sixteenth century, as of that in which we live. It is, perhaps, a greater error to suppose that Philip the Second could long listen with pleasure to such a man, or that he could have granted him his confidence even for an instant. Posa, speaking of Philip the Second, says with reason, "I have been vainly endeavouring to elevate his soul, for in this cold and thankless soil the flowers of my imagination could never prosper." But Philip the Second would never, in reality, have conversed at all with such a young man as the Marquis de Posa. The aged son of Charles the Fifth could never have seen, in youth and enthusiasm, any thing but the error of nature and the guilt of the Reformation; had he at any time bestowed his confidence on a generous being, he would have belied his character, and deserved the world's forgiveness.

There are inconsistencies in every human character, even in that of a tyrant; yet do those very inconsistencies connect themselves by invisible ties to their nature.. In the tragedy of Schiller, one of these peculiarities is seized with singular dexterity. The duke of Medina Sidonia, a general advanced in years, who had commanded the Invincible Armada, dispersed by the English fleet and the tempests, returns to Spain, and all are persuaded that he is about to be sacrificed to the resentment of Philip the Second. The courtiers retire to a distance, no man dares draw near him; he throws himself at the feet of Philip, and says to him, "Sire, you behold in me all that remains of that fleet, and of that valiant army, which you entrusted to my charge."—"God is above me," replies Philip; "I sent you forth against man, not against the storms of heaven; be still considered as my faithful servant!" This is magnanimity: yet from whence does it proceed? From a certain respect for age, in a monarch who is surprised that nature has permitted him to grow old; from pride, which will not suffer Philip to attribute to himself his misfortunes, in acknowledging he has made a bad choice; from

the indulgence he feels in favour of a man dejected by fortune, because he desires that every species of pride may be humbled, excepting his own; from the very character, in short, of a despot, whom natural obstacles revolt less than the most feeble voluntary resistance. This scene casts a strong light on the character of Philip the Second.

No doubt the character of the Marquis de Posa may be considered as the work of a young poet, who has sought to engraft his own sentiments upon his favourite personage; yet is this character very fine in itself also, pure and exalted in the midst of a court where the silence of terror is disturbed only by the subterraneous voice of intrigue. Don Carlos can never be a great man: his father must necessarily have repressed his genius in infancy; the Marquis de Posa appears to be indispensably placed as an intermediate personage between Philip and his son. Don Carlos has all the enthusiasm of the affections of the heart, Posa, that of the public virtues; one should be the king, the other the friend; and even this change of situation in the characters is an ingenious idea; for how could the son of a gloomy and cruel

despot become a patriotic hero? Where could he have learned to respect mankind? From his father, who despised them, or from his father's courtiers, who deserved that he should despise them? Don Carlos must be weak in order to be good; and the very space which love occupies in his existence, excludes from his soul all political reflexions. I repeat, then, that the invention of this character, of the Marquis de Posa, appears to me necessary, in order to bring forward in the drama the great interests of nations, and that chivalrous elevation which was suddenly changed, by the encreasing knowledge of the times, into the love of liberty. These sentiments, however modified, could never have been made suitable to the prince; in him they would have taken the form of generosity, and liberty must never be represented as the boon of power.

The ceremonious gravity of the court of Philip II. is characterized in a very striking manner in the scene between Elizabeth and her ladies of honour. She asks one of them which she likes best, the residence at Aranjuez, or at Madrid; the lady answers that, from time immemorial, the queens of Spain

have been accustomed to remain three months at Madrid, and three months at Aranjuez. She does not allow herself the least mark of preference, thinking herself born to have no feeling, except as she is commanded to feel. Elizabeth asks for her daughter, and is told that the hour appointed for seeing her is not yet come. At last the king appears, and he banishes this same devoted lady for ten years, because she has left the queen to herself for a single half hour.

Philip is reconciled for a moment to Don Carlos, and, by one speech of kindness, regains all his paternal authority over him.— "Behold," says Carlos, "the heavens bow down to assist at the reconciliation of a father to a son!"

It is a striking moment, that in which the Marquis de Posa, hopeless of escaping the vengeance of Philip, entreats Elizabeth to recommend to Don Carlos the accomplishment of the projects they have formed together for the glory and happiness of the Spanish nation. "Remind him," he says, "when he shall be of riper years, remind him, that he ought to have respect for the dreams of his youth." In

fact, as we advance in life, prudence gains too much upon all our other virtues; it seems as if all warmth of soul were merely folly; and yet, if man could still retain it when enlightened by experience, if he could inherit the benefits of age without bending under its weight, he would not insult those elevated virtues, whose first counsel is always the sacrifice of self.

The Marquis de Posa, by a too complicated succession of circumstances has been led to imagine himself able to serve the interests of Don Carlos with his father, in appearing to sacrifice him to his fury. He fails of success in these projects; the prince is sent to prison, the Marquis visits him there, explains to him the motives of his conduct, and while he is employed in justifying himself, is shot by an assassin commissioned by Philip, and falls dead at the feet of his friend. The grief of Don Carlos is admirable; he demands of his father to restore to him the companion of his youth, who has been slain by him, as if the assassin retained the power of giving back life to his victim. With his eyes fixed on this motionless corpse, but lately animated by so

many noble thoughts, Don Carlos, himself condemned to die, learns what death is in the frozen features of his friend.

In this tragedy there are two monks, whose characters and modes of life are finely contrasted; the one is Domingo, the king's confessor; the other a priest living in the retreat of a solitary convent at the gate of Madrid. Domingo is nothing but an intriguing perfidious monk, and a courtier, the confident of the duke of Alva, whose character necessarily vanishes by the side of that of Philip, since Philip appropriates to himself all that is grand in the terrible. The solitary monk receives, without knowing them, Don Carlos and Posa, who had appointed a rendezvous at this convent in the midst of their greatest agitations. The calm resignation of the prior, who gives them reception, produces a pathetic effect. "At these walls," says the pious recluse, "ends the bustle of the world."

But there is nothing in the whole piece that equals the originality of the last scene but one of the fifth act, between the king and the grand inquisitor. Philip, pursued by the jealous hatred he has conceived against his own son, and by the terror of the crime he is

going to commit, even Philip envies his pages who are sleeping peacefully at his bed's foot, while the hell in his own mind robs him of repose. He sends for the grand inquisitor to consult him on the condemnation of Don Carlos. This cardinal monk is ninety years old; more advanced in years than Charles the Fifth, if alive, would then have been; and who has formerly been that monarch's preceptor; he is blind, and lives in a perfect solitude; the spies of the inquisition bring him the news of what is passing in the world: he only informs himself whether there are any crimes, or faults, or ideas, to punish. To him, Philip the Second, in his sixtieth year, is still young. The most gloomy, the most cautious of despots, still appears to him an unthinking monarch, whose tolerating spirit will introduce the Reformation into Europe; he is a man of sincerity, but so wasted by time, that he looks like a living spectre, whom Death has forgotten to strike, because he believed him long since in his grave.

He calls Philip to account for the death of Posa; and reproaches him with it, because it was for the Inquisition to have condemned him, regretting the victim only as he had

been deprived of the right of immolating it himself. Philip interrogates him as to the condemnation of his son:—"Would you," he says, "inspire me with a belief which strips the murder of a child of its horror?" The grand inquisitor answers him, "To appease eternal justice, the son of God died on the cross."—What an expression! What a sanguinary application of the most affecting doctrine!

This blind old man represents an entire century in his own person. The profound terror with which the Inquisition and the very fanaticism of this period afflicted Spain, is painted to the life in this laconic and rapid scene: no eloquence is capable of so well expressing such a crowd of reflexions ably brought into action.

I know that many improprieties may be detected in the play of Don Carlos; but I have not taken upon myself this office, for which there are many competitors. The most ordinary men may discover defects of taste in Shakspeare, Schiller, Goëthe, &c.: but when in works of art, we think only of undervaluing their merits, there is no difficulty in the operation. A soul, and genius, are what no criticism

can bestow: these must be reverenced wherever they are seen, with whatever cloud these rays of celestial light may be surrounded. Far from rejoicing in the errors of genius, they ought to be felt as diminishing the patrimony of the human race, and the titles of honour in which it glories. The tutelary angel, so gracefully painted by Sterne, might he not have dropped one tear on the faults of a noble work, as on the errors of a noble life, in order to efface its remembrance?

I shall not dwell any longer on the productions of Schiller's youth; first, because they are translated into French; and secondly, because in them he has not yet displayed that historical genius which has rendered him so justly the object of admiration in the tragedies of his maturer age. Don Carlos itself, although founded on an historical fact, is little else than a work of the imagination. Its plot is too complicated; a character of mere invention, that of the Marquis de Posa, occupies a too principal part; the tragedy itself may be classed as something between history and poetry, without entirely satisfying the rules of either: it is certainly otherwise with those of which I am now about to attempt giving an idea.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Walstein, and Mary Stuart.

"WALSTEIN" is the most national tragedy that has ever been represented on the German stage; the beauty of the verses, and the grandeur of the subject, transported with enthusiasm all the spectators at Weimar, where it was first performed, and Germany flattered herself with possessing a new Shakspeare. Lessing, in censuring the French taste, and joining with Diderot in the manner of conceiving the dramatic art, had banished poetry from the theatre, and left nothing there but romances in dialogue, which were but a continuation of ordinary life, only crowding together in representation events which are of less frequent occurrence in reality.

Schiller thought of bringing on the stage a remarkable circumstance of the thirty years' war, that civil and religious struggle, which, for more than a century, fixed in Germany the

equilibrium of the two parties, protestant and catholic. The German nation is so divided, that it is never known whether the exploits of the one half are a misfortune or a glory for the other; nevertheless, the Walstein of Schiller has excited an equal enthusiasm in all. The same subject is divided into three distinct plays; the Camp of Walstein, which is the first of the three, represents the effects of war on the mass of the people, and of the army; the second (the Piccolomini) displays the political causes which led to the dissensions between the chiefs; and the third, the Catastrophe, is the result of the enthusiasm and envy which the reputation of Walstein had excited.

I have seen them perform the prologue, entitled, "The Camp of Walstein." It seemed as if we had been in the midst of an army, and of an army of partizans much more ardent and much worse disciplined than regular troops. The peasants, the recruits, the victualling women, the soldiers, all contributed to the effect of this spectacle; the impression it produces is so warlike, that when it was performed on the stage at Berlin, before the officers who were about to depart for the army,

shouts of enthusiasm were heard on every side. A man of letters must be possessed of a very powerful imagination to figure to himself so completely the life of a camp, the spirit of independence, the turbulent joy excited by danger itself. Man, disengaged from all his ties, without regret and without foresight, makes of years a single day, and of days a single instant; he plays for all he possesses, obeys chance under the form of his general: Death, ever present, delivers him with gaiety from the cares of life. Nothing, in the Camp of Walstein, is more original than the arrival of a Capuchin in the midst of the tumultuous band of soldiers who think they are defending the Catholic cause. The Capuchin preaches to them moderation and justice in a language full of quibbles and puns, which differs from that of camps no otherwise than by its affectation and the use of a few latin phrases: the grotesque and soldier-like eloquence of the priest, the rude and gross language of those who listen to him, all this presents a most remarkable picture of confusion. The social state in fermentation exhibits man under a singular aspect: all his savage nature re-

appears, and the remnants of civilization float like a wreck upon the troubled waves.

The Camp of Walstein forms an ingenious introduction to the two other pieces; it penetrates us with admiration for the general, of whom the soldiers are continually talking, in their games as well as in their dangers: and when the tragedy begins, we feel, from the impressions left by the prologue which has preceded it, as if we had witnessed the history which poetry is about to embellish.

The second of the pieces, called the Piccolomini, contains the discords which arise between the Emperor and his general, the general and his companion in arms, when the chief of the army wishes to substitute his personal ambition in the place of the authority he represents, as well as of the cause he supports. Walstein was fighting, in the name of Austria, against the nations who were attempting to introduce the Reformation into Germany; but, seduced by the hope of forming to himself an independant power, he seeks to appropriate all the means which he ought to have employed in the public service. The generals who oppose his views, thwart them

not out of virtue, but out of jealousy; and in these cruel struggles every body is concerned except those who are devoted to their opinions, and fighting for their conscience-sake. People will say, what is there in all this to excite interest? The picture of truth. Perhaps art demands the modification of this picture by the rules of theatrical effect; yet the representation of history on the stage is always delightful.

Nevertheless, Schiller has known how to create personages formed to excite a degree of romantic interest. He has painted Maximilian Piccolomini and Thecla, as heavenly beings, who pass through all the storms of political passion, preserving love and truth in their souls. Thecla is the daughter of Walstein; Maximilian, the son of the perfidious friend who betrays him. The two lovers, in spite of their parents, in spite of fate, and of every thing except their own hearts, love, seek each other, and are united in life and death. These two beings appear, in the midst of the tumults of ambition, as if predestined; they are the interesting victims which heaven has elected to itself, and nothing is so beautiful as the contrast between the purest self-devotion

and the passions of men, as furiously eager for this earth, as if it were their only inheritance.

There is no winding up of the tragedy of the Piccolomini; it ends like a conversation broken off. The French would find it difficult to support these two prologues, the one burlesque and the other serious, which lead to the real tragedy, which is The Death of Walstein.

A writer of great genius has reduced the *Trilogia* of Schiller into a single tragedy, according to French form and method. The eulogies and criticisms of which this work has been the object, will give us a natural opportunity of concluding our estimate of the differences which characterize the dramatic system of the French and Germans. The French writer has been censured for not having been sufficiently poetical in his verses. Mythological subjects allow all the brilliancy of images and of lyrical inspiration; but how is it possible to admit, in a subject drawn from modern history, the poetry of the recital of Theramenes? all this ancient pomp is suitable to the family of Minos or Agamemnon, but would be only ridiculous affectation in pieces of another sort. There are moments in his-

torical tragedies, at which the elevation of the soul naturally inspires a more elevated tone of poetry: such is, for example, the vision of Walstein,* his harangue after the mutiny, his

* Il est, pour les mortels, de jours mystérieux,
Où, des liens du corps notre ame dégagée,
Au sein de l'avenir est tout à coup plongée,
Et saisit, je ne sais par quel heureux effort,
Le droit inattendu d'interroger le sort.
La nuit qui précéda la sanglante journée
Qui du héros du nord trancha la destinée,
Je veillois au milieu des guerriers endormis.
Un trouble involontaire agitoit mes esprits.
Je parcourus le camp. On voyoit dans la plaine
Briller des feux lointains la lumière incertaine.
Les appels de la garde et les pas des chevaux
Troubloient seuls, d'un bruit sourd, l'universel repos.
Le vent qui gémissoit à travers les vallées
Agitoit lentement nos tentes ébranlées.
Les astres, à regret perçant l'obscurité,
Versoient sur nos drapeaux une pâle clarté.
Que de mortels, me dis-je, à ma voix obéissent!
Qu'avec empressement sous mon ordre ils fléchissent!
Ils ont, sur mes succès, placé tout leur espoir,
Mais, si le sort jaloux m'arrachoit le pouvoir,
Que bientôt je verrois s'évanouir leur zèle!
En est-il un du moins qui me restât fidèle!
Ah! s'il en est un seul, je t'invoque. O destin!
Daigne me l'indiquer par un signe certain.

Walstein, par M. Benjamin-Constant de Rebecque, Acte II. scene 1re, page 43.

monologue before his death, &c. Still, the contexture and development of the piece, in German as well as in French, requires a simplicity of style, in which one perceives only the purity of language, and seldom its magnificence. In France, we require an effect to be given, not only to every scene, but to every verse, and this is what cannot be made to agree with reality. Nothing is so easy as to compose what are called brilliant verses; there are moulds ready made for the purpose; but what is very difficult is to render every detail subordinate to the whole, and to find every part united in the whole, as well as the reflection of the whole in every part. French vivacity has given to the conduct of their theatrical pieces a very agreeable rapidity of motion; but it is injurious to the beauty of the art, to demand the succession of effect every instant, at the expense of the general impression.

This impatience, which brooks no delay, is attended by a singular patience in enduring all that the established laws of propriety enjoin; and when any sort of ennui is required by the etiquette of art, these same Frenchmen, who are irritated by the least prolixity, tolerate

every thing out of respect to custom. For example, explanations by way of recital are indispensable in French tragedy, and yet certainly they are much less interesting than when conducted by means of action. It is said that some Italian spectators once called out, during the recital of a battle, "Let them raise the curtain that we may see the battle itself." One often experiences this desire at the representation of our tragedies, the wish of being present at the scene which is related. The author of the French Walstein was obliged to throw into the substance of his play the exposition which is produced in so original a manner by the prologue of the Camp. The dignity of the first scenes perfectly agrees with the imposing tone of French tragedy; but there is a sort of motion in the irregularity of the German the want of which can never be supplied.

The French author has also been censured for the double interest inspired by the love of Alfred (Piccolomini) for Thecla, and the conspiracy of Walstein. In France they require that a piece be entirely of love, or entirely of politics, the mixture of subjects is not relished; and for a considerable time past, especially

when the subject is an affair of state, they have been unable to comprehend how the soul should admit a thought of any thing else. Nevertheless, the great picture of the conspiracy of Walstein is only completed by the misfortunes which it brings upon his family; we are to be reminded how cruelly public events may rend the private affections; and this manner of representing politics, as a world apart from which sentiments are banished, is prejudicial to morality, harsh, and destitute of dramatic effect.

A circumstance of detail has been much censured in the French tragedy. Nobody has denied that the farewell of Alfred (Max. Piccolomini) in leaving Walstein and Thecla is extremely beautiful; but people have been scandalized at the circumstance of music being, on this occasion, introduced into a tragedy: it is, to be sure, very easy to suppress it, but why refuse to participate in the effect which it produces? When we hear this military music, the prelude to the battle, the spectator partakes of the emotion which it is calculated to excite in lovers, whom it threatens with an eternal separation: the music gives relief to the situation; a new art

redoubles the impression which another has prepared; the tones and the words by turns awaken our imagination and our heart.

Two scenes, also, entirely new to our stage, have excited the astonishment of French readers: after Alfred has killed himself, Thecla asks a Saxon officer who brings the news, all the details of this horrible catastrophe; and when her soul has been satiated with grief, she announces the resolution she has taken to live and die by the tomb of her lover. Every expression, every word, in these two scenes, is marked by the deepest sensibility; but it has been pretended that dramatic interest can no longer exist when there is no longer any uncertainty. In France, they always hasten to conclude with what is irreparable. The Germans, on the contrary, are more curious about what their personages feel than about what happens to them; they are not afraid to dwell upon a situation terminated in respect of its being an event, but which still exists in the capacity of suffering. More of poetry, more of sensibility, more of nicety in the expressions, are necessary to create emotion during the repose of action, than while it excites an always encreasing anxiety: words

are hardly remarked when facts keeps us in suspense; but when all is silent, excepting grief, when there is no more change from without, and the interest attaches itself solely to what passes in the mind, a shade of affectation, a word out of place, would strike like a false note in a simple and melancholy tune. Nothing then escapes by the sound, and all speaks directly to the heart.

The censure which has been most frequently repeated against the French Walstein is that the character of Walstein himself is superstitious, uncertain, irresolute, and that it does not agree with the heroic model admitted for this class of character. The French lose an infinite source of effects and emotions in reducing their tragic characters, like the notes of music or the colours of the prism, to some striking features always the same; every personage must be conformable with some one of the principal acknowledged types. Logic may be said to be with us the foundation of the arts, and this *undulating* (*ondoyante*) nature of which Montaigne speaks is banished from our tragedies; nothing is there admitted but sentiments, entirely good or bad, and yet there is nothing that is not mixed together in the human mind.

In France, a character in tragedy is as much canvassed as that of a minister of state, and they censure him for what he does or for what he omits to do, as if they were judging his actions with the Gazette in their hands. The inconsistencies of the passions are admitted into the French theatre, but not the inconsistencies of characters. Passion being more or less understood by every heart, we can follow its wanderings, and anticipate in some degree its very contradictions: but character has always something unforeseen in it, that can be subjected to no fixed rules. Sometimes it directs itself towards its end, sometimes strays from it. When it is said of a person in France, he knows not what he wants, nobody is any longer interested about him; while it is precisely that man who knows not what he wants in whom nature displays herself with a strength and an independence truly proper for tragedy.

The characters of Shakspeare frequently excite very different impressions in the spectators during the course of the same play. Richard II. in the three first acts of the tragedy which bears his name, inspires us with contempt and aversion, but when overtaken by misfortune and forced to resign the throne

to his enemy in full parliament, his situation and his courage move us to tears. We love that royal nobleness of character which reappears in adversity, and the crown still seems to hover over the head of him whom they have stripped of it. A few words are enough for Shakspeare, to dispose of the souls of his audience and make them pass from hatred to pity. The innumerable varieties of the human heart incessantly renew the springs of genius.

It may be said that men are really inconsistent and whimsical, and that the noblest virtues are often united with miserable defects; but such characters are hardly suitable to the theatre; the dramatic art demanding rapidity of action, men cannot be painted on this canvas, but by strong touches and striking circumstances. But does it thence follow that it is necessary to confine ourselves to characters decidedly good and evil, which appear to be the invariable elements of the greater number of our tragedies? What influence could the theatre exercise over the morality of the spectators, if it displayed to them only a conventional nature? It is true that on this factitious soil virtue still triumphs, and vice is always punished; but how can this ever

apply itself to what passes in life, since the persons that are presented to us on the stage are not men such as really exist?

It would be curious to see the play of Walstein performed on our stage; and if the French author had not so rigorously subjected himself to the rules of the French drama, it would be still more curious; but, to judge rightly of the spirit of these innovations, we should carry with us to the contemplations of art a youth of the soul eager after the pleasures of novelty. To adhere to the master-pieces of the ancients is an excellent rule of taste, but not for the exercise of genius; unexpected impressions are necessary to excite it; the works which, from our infancy, we have known by heart, become habitual to us, and no longer produce any striking effect upon the imagination.

"Mary Stuart" appears to me the most pathetic and best conceived of all the German tragedies. The fate of this queen, who began her life in such prosperity, who lost her happiness through so many errors, and who was led, after nineteen years of imprisonment, to the scaffold, causes as much of terror and of pity as Œdipus, Orestes, or Niobe; but the

very beauty of this story, so favourable to genius, would crush mediocrity.

The scene is at Fotheringay Castle, where Mary Stuart is confined. Her nineteen years of captivity are already passed, and the tribunal appointed by Elizabeth is on the point of deciding the fate of the unfortunate queen of Scotland. Mary's nurse complains to the governor of the castle, of the treatment which he makes his prisoner suffer. The governor, strongly attached to queen Elizabeth, speaks of Mary with harsh severity. We perceive that he is a worthy man; but one who judges Mary as her enemies have judged her. He announces her approaching death; and this death appears to him to be just, because he believes that she has conspired against Elizabeth.

In speaking of Walstein, I have already had occasion to notice the great advantage of exposition in action. Prologues, chorusses, confidants, all possible methods to explain without fatiguing, have been resorted to, and it seems to me that the best of all is to enter immediately upon the action, and make known the principal character by the effect which it produces upon all around. It is to teach

the spectator, in what point of view he is to regard what is about to pass before him; it is to teach without telling it him: for a single word which appears to be addressed to the public, destroys the illusion of the drama. Our curiosity and our emotions are already excited, when Mary Stuart enters; we recognise her, not by a portrait, but by her influence both on friends and enemies. It is no longer a narrative to which we are listening, but an event which seems to pass immediately before our eyes.

The character of Mary Stuart is admirably supported, and never ceases to interest during the whole performance. Weak, passionate, vain of her person, and repentant of her life, we at once love and censure her. Her remorse and her errors excite compassion; we perceive, throughout, the dominion of that admirable beauty so celebrated in her time. A man, who forms the design of saving her, dares to avow, that he devotes himself for her, only from the enthusiasm which her charms have inspired. Elizabeth is jealous of those charms, and even Leicester, the favourite of Elizabeth, is become the lover of Mary, and has secretly promised her his

support. The attraction and envy, which are produced by the enchanting graces of this unfortunate woman render her fate a thousand times more affecting. She loves Leicester, this unhappy woman experiences again that sentiment, which has already more than once dashed her cup with so much bitterness. Her almost supernatural beauty appears to be the cause and excuse of that habitual intoxication of the heart which is the fatality of her existence.

The character of Elizabeth excites attention in a very different manner: a female tyrant is a new subject for painting. The littlenesses of women in general, their vanity, their desire of pleasing, in short all that results to them from servitude, tends to despotism in Elizabeth, and that dissimulation, which is born of weakness, forms one of the instruments of her absolute power. Doubtless all tyrants are dissemblers. Men must be deceived that they may be enslaved. In this case, they may require at least the politeness of falsehood. But what distinguishes the character of Elizabeth, is the desire of pleasing, united to the utmost despotism of will; and all that is most refined in the self-love of a woman, mani-

fested by the most violent acts of sovereign authority. The courtiers, also, of the queen evince a sort of baseness which partakes of gallantry. They wish to persuade themselves that they love her, in order to yield to her a more noble obedience, and to conceal the slavish fear of a subject, under the semblance of knightly subjection.

Elizabeth was a woman of great genius; the lustre of her reign evinces it. Yet in a tragedy which represents the death of Mary, Elizabeth can appear only as the rival who causes her prisoner to be assassinated; and the crime which she commits is too atrocious, not to efface all the good we might be disposed to say of her political genius. It might perhaps be considered as a still further perfection in Schiller, to have had the art of rendering Elizabeth less odious, without diminishing our interest for Mary Stuart: for there is more real talent in the shades of contrast, than in the extremes of opposition; and the principal figure itself gains, by none of the figures on the dramatic canvas being sacrificed to it.

Leicester intreats Elizabeth to see Mary—He proposes to her, to stop in the middle

of a hunting party, in the garden of Fotheringay Castle, and to permit Mary to walk there—Elizabeth consents, and the third act opens with the affecting joy of Mary in again breathing the free air, after nineteen years imprisonment. All the risks she runs, have vanished from her eyes; her nurse endeavours in vain to recall them to her, to moderate her transports. Mary has forgotten all in recovering the sight of the sun and of nature. She feels again the happiness of childhood, at the view, new to her, of the flowers, the trees, and the birds; and the ineffable impression of those external wonders on one who has been long separated from them, is painted in the intoxicating emotion of the unfortunate captive. The remembrance of France awakens her to delight; she charges the clouds which the north wind seems to impel towards that happy native land of her affection,—she charges them to bear to her friends, her regrets and her desires. "Go," she says to them, "Go, you, my only messen-"gers! the free air is your inheritance—You "are not the subjects of Elizabeth." She perceives in the distance a fisherman guiding a crazy boat, and already flatters herself with

the idea of escaping. At the sight of the heavens, all things seem to reanimate her with hope.

She is not yet informed that they have permitted her to leave her prison, for the purpose of Elizabeth's meeting her. She hears the music of the hunt, and the pleasures of her youth are retraced to her imagination as she listens to it. She would herself mount the fiery steed, and fly with the rapidity of lightning over vale and hill. The feeling of happiness is revived in her, without reason or motive, only because it is necessary that the heart should breathe again, and be sometimes reanimated on a sudden, at the approach of the greatest calamities, even as there is almost always a momentary interval of amendment before the agony of death.

They come to inform Mary that Elizabeth is approaching. She had wished for this interview, but as the moment draws near a shuddering runs through all her frame. Leicester accompanies Elizabeth—thus all the passions of Mary are at once excited, she commands herself for a time; but the arrogant Elizabeth provokes her by her disdain, and the two rival queens end by alike abandoning themselves to the mutual hatred which

they experience. Elizabeth reproaches Mary with her faults; Mary recalls to her mind the suspicions of Henry the Eighth against her mother, and what had been said of her illegitimate birth. This scene is singularly fine, on this very account, that their mutual rage makes the two queens transgress the bounds of their natural dignity. They are no longer any other than two women, rivals in respect of beauty, even more than of power: they are no longer, the one a sovereign, and the other a prisoner; and even though the one possesses the power of sending the other to the scaffold, the most beautiful of the two, she who feels that she is most made to please, enjoys even yet the pleasure of humbling the all powerful Elizabeth in the eyes of Leicester, in the eyes of the lover, who is so dear to them both.

Another circumstance that adds greatly to the effect of this situation, is the fear that we experience for Mary at every resentful phrase that escapes her: and when she abandons herself to all her fury, her injurious speeches, the consequences of which we know to be irreparable, make us tremble, as if we already witnessed her death.

The emissaries of the catholic party form

the design of assassinating Elizabeth on her return to London. Talbot, the most virtuous of the queen's friends, disarms the assassin who attempted to stab her, and the people cry out aloud for the blood of Mary. It is an admirable scene, in which the Chancellor Burleigh presses Elizabeth to sign the death-warrant of Mary, while Talbot, who has just saved the life of his sovereign, throws himself at her feet to implore her to pardon her enemy.

"They repeat to you," he says, "that the "people demand her death; they think to "please you by this pretended violence; they "think to determine you to what you wish; "but only declare that it is your will to save "her, and you will in a moment see this pre-"tended necessity of her death disappear: "what was just before pronounced to be jus-"tice will then pass for injustice, and the very "men who accuse her will warmly take upon "themselves her defence. You fear her, "living; ah! fear her most when she will be "no more! It is then that she will really be "to be feared; she will be torn again from "her tomb, like the goddess of Discord, like "the spirit of vengeance, to avert from you

" the hearts of your subjects; they will see
" in her no longer the enemy of their faith,
" but the descendant of their kings. The
" people madly call for this bloody resolution;
" but they will judge of it only after the
" event. Then pass through the streets of
" London, and you will see the silence of
" terror reign throughout them; you will
" see in them another people, another Eng-
" land; there will be no more those tran-
" sports of rejoicing that used to celebrate
" the sacred justice which environed your
" throne; but fear, that gloomy companion
" of tyranny, will never more quit your side;
" the streets will be deserted as you pass;
" you will have done that which is the most
" decided and the most terrible. What man
" will be secure of his own life, when the
" royal head of Mary shall have failed to be
" respected!"

The answer of Elizabeth to this discourse is a speech of remarkable address; a man in a similar situation would certainly have employed falsehood to palliate injustice; but Elizabeth does more, she wishes to excite interest, even in abandoning herself to her revenge; she would even, if possible, inspire compassion in

perpetrating the most barbarous action. She has the spirit of a sanguinary coquetry, if we may be allowed the expression, and the character of the woman discovers itself through that of the tyrant.

"Ah, Talbot," exclaims Elizabeth, "you "have this day saved my life: you have "averted the dagger from me; why did you "not let it reach my heart? the conflict "would have been ended, and I should have "gone down into my peaceful grave, delivered "from all my doubts, and purified from all "my frailties. Believe me I am weary of my "throne, and of life. If one of the two queens "must die, that the other may live (and that "it is so I am convinced) why should not I "resign my existence for her! My people "may choose, I restore to them their power; "God is my witness, that it is not for myself, "but for the good of the nation only that I "have lived: do they expect from this se-"ductive Stuart, from this younger queen, "more happy days? if so, I descend from the "throne and return to the solitude of Wood-"stock, where I passed my humble youth, "where, far from the vanities of this world, "I found my greatness within myself. No,

" I am not made to be a sovereign. A master
" should be hard, and my heart is weak. I
" have governed this island well, so long as
" I had only to make men happy; but this is
" the cruel task imposed by royal duty, which
" I find myself incapable of performing."

At this sentence Burleigh interrupts Elizabeth, and reproaches her for all that she desires to be reproached with; her meekness, her indulgence, her compassion; he assumes the appearance of courage, in demanding of his sovereign with vehemence, that which she secretly desires more than himself. Rough flattery generally succeeds better than obsequious flattery; and it is well for courtiers when they are able to give themselves the appearance of being hurried on, at the moment when they most deeply reflect upon what they are saying. Elizabeth signs the warrant; and, left alone with her private secretary, the woman's timidity, which mixes itself with the perseverance of despotism, makes her desire this inferior personage to take upon himself the responsibility of the action which she is committing. He requires a positive order for sending the warrant, which she refuses, repeating that he must do his duty. She leaves

this unfortunate man in a frightful state of uncertainty, out of which he is delivered by the chancellor snatching from him the paper, which Elizabeth has left in his hands.

Leicester finds himself entangled by the friends of the Queen of Scotland, who have been imploring his assistance to save her. He discovers that he has been accused to Elizabeth, and takes on a sudden the shocking resolution of abandoning Mary, and betraying to the Queen of England, with impudent artifice, a part of the secrets which he owes to the confidence of his unfortunate friend. Notwithstanding all these unworthy sacrifices, he only half succeeds in satisfying Elizabeth: and she requires him to lead Mary to the scaffold himself, in order to prove that he does not love her. The woman's jealousy, that discovers itself in the punishment which Elizabeth commands as a monarch, ought to inspire Leicester with the most profound hatred for her. The queen causes him to tremble, who, by the laws of nature, should have been her master; and this singular contrast is productive of a very original situation: But nothing is equal to the fifth act. It was at Weimar that I was present at the repre-

sentation of Mary Stuart, and I cannot even yet remember, without deep emotion, the effect of the concluding scenes.

At first we see enter Mary's female attendents, dressed in mourning, and in profound sorrow. The old nurse, the most afflicted of all, brings in her royal jewels, which she has ordered her to collect together, that she may distribute them among her women. The governor of the prison, followed by many of his servants, dressed in black also, as well as himself, fill the stage with mourning. Melville, formerly a gentleman in Mary's court, arrives from Rome at this moment. Anne, the queen's nurse, receives him with joy. She paints to him the courage of Mary, who, all at once resigned to her fate, is no longer occupied by the concerns of her soul, and is only afflicted at not having been able to obtain a priest of her own religion, to receive from him the absolution of her sins, and the holy communion.

The nurse relates how, during the night, the queen and she had heard the sound of reiterated blows, and both hoped that it arose from their friends endeavouring to effect her deliverance; but that at last they had disco-

vered the noise to proceed from the workmen, who were erecting the scaffold in the hall underneath. Melville enquires how Mary supported this terrible discovery; and Anne informs him, that her severest trial was that of learning the treason of the Earl of Leicester; but that after undergoing this shock, she had recovered the composure and the dignity of a queen. Mary's women come in and go out to execute their mistress's orders. One of them brings a cup of wine, which Mary has called for, to enable her to walk with a firmer step to the scaffold. Another comes tottering upon the stage, having seen, through the door of the hall, where the execution is to take place, the walls hung with black, the scaffold, the block, and the axe. The fear of the spectator, always increasing, is already near its height, when Mary appears in all the magnificence of royal ornament, alone clad in white in the midst of her mourning attendants, with a crucifix in her hand, a crown on her head, and already irradiated with the celestial pardon which her misfortunes have obtained for her. Mary comforts her women, whose sobs affect her with lively emotion. "Why," says she,

" afflict yourself that my prison gates are
" open? Death, that severe friend, is ap-
" proaching me, and spreads his dark wings,
" over the errors of my life. The last judg-
" ment of Fate raises again the poor cast
" down creature. I feel the diadem encircling
" my forehead anew. A noble pride is re-
" kindled in my purified soul."

Mary perceives Melville, and rejoices at seeing him in this solemn moment: she questions him about her kindred in France, about her ancient servants, and charges him with her last adieu to all that was dear to her. " I bless," she says, " The Most Christian
" King, my brother-in-law, and all the royal
" family of France; I bless my uncle, the
" Cardinal, and Henry de Guise, my noble
" cousin. I bless also the Holy Father,
" that he may bless me in return; and the
" Catholic King, who generously offered him-
" self to be my saviour and avenger. They
" will all find their names written in my last
" testament; and however trifling in value
" may be the tributes of my affection, they
" will not disdain them." Mary then turns aside to her servants, and says to them, " I
" have recommended you to my royal brother

" in France, he will take care of you, and will
" give you a new country. If my last prayer
" is sacred to you, remain not in England!
" Let not the proud heart of the Englishman
" feast itself on the spectacle of your unhap-
" piness! Let not those who have served me
" be humbled to the dust! Swear to me, by
" the image of Christ, that from the moment
" when I shall be no more, you will quit this
" fatal island." (Melville swears in the name of all.)

The queen distributes her jewels among her women; and nothing can be more affecting than the details into which she enters respecting the characters of each of them, and the advice which she gives them for their future conduct. She particularly displays her generosity towards one, whose husband had been a traitor, in formerly accusing Mary herself before Elizabeth. She tries to console her for this calamity, and to prove to her that she retains no resentment on account of it. " As for thee," she says to her nurse,
" as for thee, my faithful Anna, gold and
" jewels do not attract thee; my memory
" is the most precious legacy that I can be-
" queath to thee; take this handkerchief,

" which I embroidered for thee in the " hours of my distress, and which has been " moistened by my burning tears; thou shalt " use it to bind my eyes at the fatal mo- " ment. I expect this last service from thee. " Come all of you," she says, extending her hand to her women, " Come, all of you, " and receive my last farewell! receive it " Margaret, Alice, Rosamond, and thou, " Gertrude! I feel thy burning lips upon my " hand! I have been deeply hated, but I have " been also faithfully loved,—may a noble- " minded husband render my Gertrude happy; " for so feeling a heart has need to be be- " loved. Bertha, thou hast chosen the better " part, thou hast chosen to become the chaste " spouse of heaven—make haste to accom- " plish thy vow—the good things of the " world are deceitful, the fate of thy queen " bears witness to it. It is enough! Adieu! " for ever adieu!"

Mary remains alone with Melville, and then begins a scene, the effect of which is very grand, however it may be open to censure in many respects. The only grief that remains to Mary, after she had provided for all her worldly cares, arises from her not

being able to obtain a priest of her own religion to assist at her last moments. Melville, after receiving the secret of her pious sorrows, informs her that he has been at Rome, that he has there taken orders that he might acquire the right of absolving and comforting her: he uncovers his head, to shew her the holy tonsure, and takes out of his bosom a wafer, which the Pope himself had blessed for her.

"A celestial happiness," cries the queen, "is then prepared for me, even upon the "threshold of the grave. The messenger of "God descends towards me like an immortal "spirit, on clouds of azure: thus was the "Apostle of old delivered from his chains. "And while all earthly alliances have failed "me, neither bars nor swords have stayed "the succour of Heaven. You, formerly my "servant, be now the servant of God, and his "holy interpreter; and, as your knees were "once bent before me, I now prostrate myself "at your feet in the dust."

The beautiful, the royal Mary, throws herself at Melville's feet; and her subject, invested with all the dignity of the Church, suffers her to remain in that situation, while he examines her.

(It must not be forgotten, that Melville himself believed Mary guilty of the last plot against the life of Elizabeth. I should add, that the following scene should only be read; and that, on most of the German stages, they suppress the act of communion in the representation of this tragedy.)

MELVILLE.

" In the name of the Father, the Son, and " the Holy Ghost, Mary, Queen, hast thou " examined thy heart, and dost thou swear " to confess the truth in the presence of the " God of Truth?

MARY.

" My heart is about to open itself without " disguise before thee, as before him.

MELVILLE.

" Tell me, of what sin doth thy conscience " accuse thee since thou last drewest nigh " the holy table?

MARY.

" My soul hath been full of envious hatred, " and thoughts of vengeance have agitated " my bosom. Sinner, I implored the forgive- " ness of God, and knew not how to forgive " mine enemy.

MELVILLE.

" Dost thou repent thee of this fault; and " is it thy sincere resolution to forgive all men " before thou takest leave of this world?

MARY.

" As true as I hope the mercy of God.

MELVILLE.

" Is there no other wrong that thou hast to " reproach thyself with?

MARY.

" Ah! it is not by hatred only that I have " been rendered culpable, I have still more " deeply offended the God of justice by a cri- " minal love: this too vain heart hath suffered " itself to be seduced by a faithless man, who " hath deceived and abandoned me.

MELVILLE.

" Dost thou repent thee of this error; and " hath thy heart quitted this frail idol to turn " towards God?

MARY.

" It was the hardest of all my struggles; " but I have at length torn asunder this last " worldly tie.

MELVILLE.

" Of what other fault dost thou feel thyself " guilty?

MARY.

" Ah! of the crime of blood, long since " confessed. My soul shudders as it draws " nigh the solemn judgment that awaits me, " and the gates of heaven seem to my eyes " covered with mourning. I caused the death " of the king, my husband, when I consented " to give my heart and hand to the seducer " who murdered him. I have imposed on " myself all the expiations ordained by the " Church: but the gnawing worm of remorse " allows me no rest."

MELVILLE.

" Is there nothing more remaining at the " bottom of thy soul, that ought to be con- " fessed?

MARY.

" Nothing.—Thou knowest now all that " weighs upon my heart.

MELVILLE.

" Think upon the presence of the Searcher " of Thoughts, upon the anathema with which " the Church threatens a fraudulent confes- " sion; it is a sin which causes eternal death, " and against which the curse of the Holy " Ghost is denounced.

MARY.

" May I obtain the divine clemency in my
" last conflict, as in this solemn instant I have
" disguised nothing from thee!

MELVILLE.

" How! dost thou hide from thy God the
" crime, for the punishment of which man
" hath condemned thee? thou hast not spo-
" ken to me of the part thou hast had in the
" high treason of the assassins of Elizabeth;
" thou undergoest the death of this world for
" that action; wouldst thou that it should
" draw after it the perdition of thy soul also?

MARY.

" I am ready to pass from time to eternity:
" before the hand that points the hour shall
" have completed its circle, I shall present
" myself before the throne of my judge;
" and, here I repeat it, my confession is com-
" plete.

MELVILLE.

" Examine well thyself. Our hearts are
" often treacherous confidents to ourselves;
" thou hast perhaps avoided with skill the
" word that would have rendered thee cul-
" pable, although a partaker of the crime in
" intention; yet learn that no human artifice

" can elude that eye of fire which penetrates
" the bottom of the soul.

MARY.

" I have implored all princes to unite to-
" gether in order to deliver me from my
" captivity; but never have I threatened,
" either in project or in action, the life of my
" enemy.

MELVILLE.

" What! thy secretary hath accused thee,
" then, falsely?

MARY.

" God be his judge! What I have said is
" true.

MELVILLE.

" And thou ascendest the scaffold con-
" vinced of thine innocence?

MARY.

" God grant me to expiate by this death,
" which I have not deserved, the crime where-
" of my youth was guilty!

MELVILLE (*blessing her.*)

" So be it! and may thy death serve to
" absolve thee! Fall thou, a resigned victim,
" upon the altar! Blood is able to cleanse
" what blood hath defiled: thou art no more
" guilty, but of a woman's failings, and the

" weaknesses of humanity do not follow the " blessed soul to heaven. I announce to thee, " therefore, by virtue of the power which hath " been given me to tie and untie upon earth " the absolution of thy sins. *As thou hast be-* " *lieved, may it happen unto thee!*" *(He presents* " *to her the consecrated wafer.)* " Take this " body, which was sacrificed for thee!" *(He* " *takes the cup that is on the table, he consecrates* " *it with an inward prayer, and offers it to the* " *queen, who seems still to hesitate, as not daring* " *to receive it.)* " Take the cup, filled with that " blood which was shed for thee! Take it, the " Pope grants to thee this mark of grace at " the moment of thy death. It is the supreme " right of kings that thou enjoyest." *(Mary* " *receives the cup);* " and, as thou art now " mysteriously united to thy God upon earth, " so, clad in angelic light, shalt thou be in that " region of blessedness, where there will be " no more either of sin or pain." *(He replaces* " *the cup, and, hearing a noise without, covers his* " *head again, and steps toward the door: Mary* " *remains on her knees, lost in meditation.)*

MELVILLE.

" There remains to you yet, Madam, a se- " vere trial to undergo: Dost thou feel within

" thyself strength sufficient to triumph over
" all the emotions of bitterness and hatred?

MARY (*rising.*)

" I fear no relapse; I have sacrificed to
" God my hatred and my love.

MELVILLE.

" Prepare yourself, then, to receive Lord
" Leicester, and the Chancellor Burleigh:
" here they are. (*Leicester remains in the back*
" *ground, without raising his eyes: Burleigh ad-*
" *vances between him and the Queen.*)

BURLEIGH.

" I come, lady Stuart, to receive your last
" commands.

MARY.

" I thank you, my Lord.

BURLEIGH.

" It is the Queen's will that no just request
" be refused you.

MARY.

" My testament indicates my last wishes;
" I have deposited it in the hands of Sir Amias
" Paulet, and hope that it will be faithfully
" executed.

PAULET.

" It shall be so.

MARY.

" As my body must not rest in holy ground,
" I ask that it may be granted to this faithful
" servant, to bear my heart to France, there
" to be placed among my kindred. Alas! it
" has always been there.

BURLEIGH.

" It shall be done: Do you wish for any
" thing more?

MARY.

" Bear a sister's greetings from me to the
" Queen of England! tell her that I forgive
" her from the bottom of my soul. I repent
" me of having been too quick in my conver-
" sation with her yesterday. May God pre-
" serve and grant her a happy reign!" (*At
" this instant the Sheriff arrives, Anna and
" Mary's other female attendants, enter with him.*)
" Anna, calm thyself! the moment is come—
" behold the sheriff who comes to conduct me
" to death, All is decided. Farewell! fare-
" well!" (*To Burleigh.*) " I wish that my
" faithful nurse may attend me to the scaf-
" fold, my lord;" grant me this kindness.

BURLEIGH.

" I have no power in this respect.

MARY.

" How! can they refuse me so simple a " supplication! who then will render me the " last services? It cannot be my sister's will, " to wound, in my person, the respect due to " a woman.

BURLEIGH.

" No female must ascend the scaffold with " you. Her cries, her grief——

MARY.

" She will not let her lamentations be heard. " I will answer for the strength of mind of " my Anna. Be so good, my lord, as not to " separate me, in dying, from my faithful " nurse. She received me in her arms on the " threshold of life—let her gentle hand con- " duct me to the grave.

PAULET.

" We must consent.

BURLEIGH.

" So be it.

MARY.

" I have nothing more to ask of you. *(She* " *takes the crucifix and kisses it.)* My Redeemer, " my Saviour, may thine arms receive me! " *(She turns back to go out, and at that moment* " *meets the Earl of Leicester; she trembles; her*

" *knees bend under her, and, ready to fall, Leicester*
" *supports her; then turns away his head, unable*
" *to sustain her looks.)* " You keep your word
" to me, Earl Leicester! you promised me
" your assistance in getting out of this prison,
" and you offer it to me now." *(The Earl*
" *appears overwhelmed; she continues, in a voice*
" *full of gentleness.)* " Yes, Leicester, and it is
" not liberty only for which I desired to be
" indebted to you, but a liberty which would
" have been the more dear to me, as holding
" it of you; now, that I am on the road from
" earth to heaven, and am about to become a
" blessed spirit, freed from all earthly affec-
" tions, I dare avow to you, without blushing,
" the weakness over which I have triumphed.
" Adieu, and, if you can, live happy. You
" wished to please two queens, and you have
" betrayed the loving, to obtain the proud
" heart. Fall prostrate at the feet of Elizabeth,
" and may your reward never become your
" punishment! Farewell! I have now no tie
" upon earth."

Leicester remains alone after the departure of Mary, the feeling of despair and shame that overwhelms him can hardly be expressed; he listens, he hears all that is passing in the

hall of execution, and, when the business is ended, he falls senseless on the ground. We are afterwards told that he is gone to France, and the grief of Elizabeth at the loss of her lover is the beginning of her punishment.

I shall make some observations on this imperfect analysis of a piece, in which the charm of the verse adds greatly to its other merits. I hardly know if they would permit, in France, an entire act on one decisive situation; but that repose of grief, which springs from the very privation of hope, produces the truest and the most profound emotions. This solemn repose permits the spectator, as well as the victim, to descend into himself, and feel all that misery reveals to him.

The scene of the confession, and above all that of the communion, would be condemned altogether, and with reason; but it is certainly not for want of effect that it would be censured: the pathetic never touches the heart more nearly than when founded on the national religion. The most Catholic country in Europe, and its most religious poet, Calderon, who had himself entered into the ecclesiastical order, have admitted as subjects for the stage, the ceremonies of Christianity.

It seems to me that, without being at all wanting in the reverence which we owe to the Christian religion, we may suffer it to enter into poetry and the fine arts, into all that elevates the soul and embellishes life. To exclude it thence, is to imitate children who think they can do nothing but what is sad and solemn in their father's house. There is religion in every thing that occasions a disinterested emotion of the mind; poetry, love, nature, and the Divinity itself, are connected together in the heart, whatever efforts we may make to separate them; and, if genius is prohibited from sounding all these strings at once, the full harmony of the soul will never be heard.

This very Mary whom France beheld so brilliant, and England so unhappy, has been the subject of a thousand different poems, celebrating her charms and her misfortunes. History has painted her as sufficiently light; Schiller has thrown more of the serious into her character, and the period at which he brings her forward may well account for the change. Twenty years of imprisonment, even twenty years of existence, in whatever manner they have been spent, are generally a severe lesson.

The adieu of Mary to the Earl of Leicester appears to me to be one of the finest situations to be met with on the stage. There is some sweetness for her in that trying moment. She has a compassion for Leicester, all guilty as he is; she feels what a remembrance she bequeaths to him, and this vengeance of the heart is not prohibited. In short, at the moment of death, of a death, the consequence of his refusal to save her, she again says to him that she loves him; and if any thing can console the mind under the terrible separation to which we are doomed by death, it is the solemnity which it gives to our parting words: no end, no hope, can mingle with them, and the purest truth is exhaled from our bosoms with life.

CHAPTER XIX.

Joan of Arc, and the Bride of Messina.

SCHILLER, in a copy of verses full of grace, reproaches the French with ingratitude towards Joan of Arc. One of the most noble epochs of history, that in which France, and her king, Charles the Seventh, were rescued from the yoke of foreigners, has never yet been celebrated by any writer worthy of effacing the remembrance of Voltaire's poem; and it is a stranger that has attempted to re-establish the glory of a French heroine, of a heroine whose unhappy fate might interest us in her favour, even though her exploits did not excite our just enthusiasm. Shakspeare could not but judge of Joan of Arc with the partiality of an Englishman; yet even he represents her, in his historical play of Henry the Sixth, as having been at first inspired by heaven, and only subsequently corrupted by the dæmon

of ambition. Thus, the French only have suffered her memory to be dishonoured: it is a great fault of our nation, to be incapable of resisting the ridiculous, when presented to us under a striking form. Yet is there so much room in the world for the serious and the gay together, that we might impose it upon ourselves as a law, never to trifle with what is worthy of our veneration, and yet lose nothing, by doing so, of the freedom of pleasantry.

The subject of "Joan of Arc" partaking at once of the historical and the marvellous, Schiller has intermingled in his Play pieces of lyrical poetry, and the mixture produces a fine effect, even in representation. We have hardly any thing in the French language, except the Monologue of Polyeucte and the Chorusses of Athalie and Esther, that can give us any idea of it. Dramatic poetry is inseparable from the situation which it is required to paint; it is recitation in action, the conflict of man with fate. Lyrical poetry is almost always suited to religious subjects; it raises the soul towards heaven; it expresses I know not what of sublime resignation which often takes an hold on us in the midst of the

most tumultuous passions, and delivers us from our personal disquietudes to give us for an instant the taste of divine peace.

No doubt we must take care that the progressive advance of the interest shall not suffer by it; but the end of the dramatic art is not only to inform us whether the hero is killed or whether he marries: the principal object of the events represented is to serve to develope sentiments and characters. The poet is in the right, therefore, sometimes to suspend the action of the theatre to make us listen to the heavenly music of the soul. We may abstract ourselves in art, as in life, and soar for a moment above all that passes within us and around us.

The historical epoch at which Joan of Arc existed is peculiarly proper to display the French character in all its beauty, when an unalterable faith, an unbounded reverence for women, an almost imprudent generosity in war, signalized this nation throughout Europe.

We must picture to ourselves a young girl of sixteen, of a majestic form, but with still infantine features, a delicate exterior, and without any strength but that which comes to

her from on high; inspired by religion, poetical in her actions, poetical also in her speech, when animated by the divine spirit; shewing in her discourses, sometimes an admirable genius, at others an absolute ignorance of all that Heaven has not revealed to her. It is thus that Schiller has conceived the part of Joan of Arc. He first shews her at Vaucouleurs in the rustic habitation of her father, where she hears of the misfortunes of France, and is enflamed by the recital. Her aged father blames her sadness, her thoughtfulness, her enthusiasm. Unaccustomed to penetrate the secret of what is extraordinary, he thinks that there is evil in all that is not habitual to him. A countryman brings in a helmet which a gipsey had put into his hands in a very mysterious manner. Joan of Arc snatches it from him, and places it on her own head, while her family contemplate with astonishment the expression of her eyes.

She prophecies the triumph of France and the defeat of her enemies. A peasant, an *esprit fort*, tells her that there are no longer any miracles in the world. "There will be yet "another," she exclaims: "a white dove "is about to appear and with the boldness of

" an eagle she will combat the vultures which
" are tearing our country in pieces. He will
" be overthrown, that proud Duke of Bur-
" gundy, traitor to France, that Talbot with the
" hundred arms, the scourge of Heaven, that
" blaspheming Salisbury, and all those hordes
" of islanders will be dispersed like a flock of
" sheep. The Lord God of battles will be
" always with the dove. He will deign to
" elect a trembling creature, and will triumph
" by a weak girl, for he is the Almighty."

The sisters of Joan of Arc retire to a distance, and her father orders her to busy herself in her rural labours, and remain a stranger to those great events with which poor shepherds have nothing to do. He goes out, Joan of Arc remains alone; and, about to depart for ever from the abode of her infancy, a feeling of regret seizes her.

" Adieu," she says, " you regions that
" were so dear to me; you mountains, you
" quiet and faithful vallies, adieu: Joan of
" Arc will return no more to visit your
" laughing meadows. You, flowers that I
" have planted, prosper far from me. I leave
" you, dark grotto, refreshing fountains,
" Echo, thou, the clear voice of the valley,

" who art wont to answer my songs, never " shall these places behold me again. You, " the asylum of all my innocent pleasures, I " leave you for ever: let my lambs be scat- " tered over the heath, another flock demands " me, the Holy Spirit calls me to the bloody " career of danger.

" It is not a vain or earthly desire that im- " pels me, it is the voice of him who revealed " himself to Moses in the burning bush of " Mount Horeb, and commanded him to resist " the power of Pharaoh. It is he, who, always " favourable to shepherds, called the young " David to combat the giant. He has said to " me also;—Depart, and bear witness to my " name on earth. Thy limbs must be cased " in hard brass. Thy delicate bosom must be " encircled with steel. No man shall teach " thy heart to experience the flames of " love. The hymeneal chaplet shall never " ornament thy hair, no cherished infant " shall repose on thy breast; but, among " all the women of the earth, thou shalt alone " receive as thine inheritance the laurels of " combats. When the bravest are weary, " when the fatal hour of France seems to " draw nigh, it is thou who shalt bear my

" *oriflamme;* and thou shalt cast down the " proud conquerors even as the blades of corn " fall on the day of the reaping. Thine ex- " ploits shall turn the wheel of fortune, thou " shalt bear salvation to the heroes of France, " and, in Rheims set free, shalt place the " crown on the head of thy sovereign.

" It is thus that Heaven hath explained it- " self to me. It hath sent me this helmet as " a mark of its will. The miraculous temper " of this steel communicates its strength to " me, and I am enflamed with the ardour of " warring angels; I go to plunge into the " whirlwind of battles, it drags me onward " with the impetuosity of the tempest. I hear " the voice of heroes calling to me; the " warhorse strikes the earth, and the trumpet " sounds."

This first scene is a prologue, but it is inseparable from the piece; it was necessary to put in action the instant at which Joan of Arc embraces her solemn resolution; had the poet contented himself with the bare recital, he would have deprived it of the movement and impulse which transport the spectator into that frame of mind which is demanded by the wonders he is obliged to believe.

The play of Joan of Arc proceeds uniformly, according to the history, to the period of the coronation at Rheims. The character of Agnes Sorel is painted with elevation and delicacy, and adds effect to the purity of Joan of Arc; for all the endowments of this world vanish by the side of virtues truly religious. There is a third female character, that of Isabel of Bavaria, which it might be well to suppress altogether; it is gross, and the contrast is much too strong to produce any effect. Joan of Arc is rightly opposed to Agnes Sorel, a heavenly love to that which is earthly; but hatred and obstinacy in a woman are beneath the dignity of art, which degrades itself in painting them.

Shakspeare gave the idea of the scene in which Joan of Arc brings back the Duke of Burgundy to the fealty he owes his king; but Schiller has executed it in an admirable manner. The maid of Orleans wishes to revive in the Duke's soul that attachment to France which was then so powerful in the minds of all the generous inhabitants of that noble country.

"What dost thou aim at?" she says to him: "who is then the enemy that thou

" seekest with that murderous aspect? the " prince whom thou wouldst attack is, like " thyself, of the royal race; thou wert his com- " panion in arms. His country is thy country, I, " myself, am I not a daughter of thy country? " All of us whom you would annihilate, are " we not thy friends? Our arms are ready to " open to receive thee, our knees to bend " in all humility before thee. Our swords are " pointless against thy heart; thine aspect " intimidates us, and under the helmet of an " enemy we still venerate in thy features the " likeness of our kings."

The Duke of Burgundy rejects the supplications of Joan of Arc, fearing her supernatural seduction.

" It is not," she says, " it is not necessity " that makes me bend before thee, I approach " not thy feet as a suppliant. Look around " thee. The English camp is in ashes, and " the bodies of your dead cover the field of " battle; thou hearest from all sides the war- " like trumpets of the French: God hath " decided: the victory is ours. We would " partake with our friend the laurels we have " achieved. Oh! come with us, noble deserter! " Come, it is with us that thou wilt find justice

" and victory; I, the envoy of God, I hold
" forth to thee the hand of a sister. I wish,
" in preserving thee, to bring thee over to our
" side. Heaven is for France! Angels whom
" thou seest not fight for our monarch. They
" are all adorned with lilies. The standard of
" our illustrious cause is also white like the
" lily, and the holy virgin is its chaste symbol.

THE DUKE OF BURGUNDY.

" The deceitful words of falsehood are full
" of artifice: but the language of this woman
" is simple, like that of a child; and if the
" evil genius inspires her, he knows how to
" breathe into her the words of innocence; no,
" I will hear her no more. To arms! I shall
" defend myself better in the combat with
" her, than in listening to her.

JOAN.

" Thou accusest me of magic: thou think-
" est to see in me the delusions of hell! To
" establish peace, to reconcile hatreds, is this
" then the work of hell? should concord
" arise out of the abode of the damned? what
" is there of innocent, of sacred, of good in
" human nature, if it is not to devote our-
" selves for our country? How long has
" nature experienced such a conflict with

" itself, that heaven abandons the good cause,
" and the devil undertakes to defend it? If
" what I say to thee is true, what is the foun-
" tain from whence it proceeds? Who was
" the companion of my pastoral life? Who
" then instructed the simple shepherd's daugh-
" ter in things relating to royalty? I was never
" presented before sovereigns; the art of
" speech is strange to me; yet, now that I
" have need of awakening thee, a profound
" penetration illuminates my soul; I rise to
" the loftiest thoughts; the fate of empires
" and of kings is made manifest to my eyes;
" and, hardly yet emerged out of infancy, I
" am able to direct the thunderbolt of Heaven
" against thy heart."

At these words, the Duke of Burgundy is moved, is troubled. Joan of Arc perceives it, and exclaims: " He has wept, he is con-
" quered, he is ours." The French bend their swords and colours before him. Charles the Seventh appears, and the Duke of Burgundy throws himself at his feet.

I regret, for our national honour, that this scene was not conceived by a Frenchman; but how much genius, and, above all, how much nature is necessary to become thus identified

with all that is great and true in all countries and in all ages!

Talbot, whom Schiller represents as an atheist-warrior, intrepid against Heaven itself, despising death, even though he thinks it full of horror, Talbot, wounded by Joan of Arc, dies on the stage blaspheming. Perhaps it would have been better to follow the tradition, which says, that Joan of Arc never shed human blood, and triumphed without killing. A critic, of a refined and severe judgment, has also reproached Schiller with having made Joan of Arc susceptible of love, instead of making her die a martyr, without having ever experienced any sentiment foreign to the object of her divine mission: it is thus that she should be painted in a poem; but I know not whether a soul of such unspotted holiness would not produce, in a piece designed for the stage, the same effect as marvellous or allegorical beings, whose actions are all foreseen, and who, not being agitated by human passions, present to us no dramatic conflict or interest.

Among the noble knights of the Court of France, the brave Dunois presses forward the first to ask Joan of Arc to become his wife; and, constant to her vows, she refuses him.

A young Montgomery, in the midst of a battle, implores her to spare him, and represents to her the grief which his death will occasion to his aged father; Joan of Arc rejects his prayer, and displays, upon this occasion, more inflexibility than her duty demands; but at the instant when she is about to strike a young Englishman, Lionel, she feels herself at once softened by his beauty, and love finds entrance into her heart. Then all her power is destroyed. A knight, black as fate, appears to her in the battle, and counsels her not to go to Rheims. She goes there, notwithstanding; the solemn pomp of the coronation passes on the stage; Joan of Arc walks in the first rank, but her steps are unsteady; she bears in a trembling hand the consecrated standard, and the holy spirit is perceived to protect her no longer.

Before she enters the church, she stops short, and remains alone on the stage. From afar off are heard the festive instruments that accompany the ceremony of the consecration; and Joan of Arc utters harmonious complaints, while the sound of flutes and hautbois floats gently in the air.

" Our arms are laid aside, the storm of war

" is hushed, songs and dances succeed to san-
" guinary combats. Joyful chorusses are
" heard along the streets; the altar and the
" church are dressed out in all the splendour
" of a festival; garlands of flowers are sus-
" pended from the pillars: this vast city can
" scarce hold the number of foreign guests
" who hasten hither to witness the popular
" triumph; one only sentiment occupies every
" heart; and those who were separated of late
" by a murderous hatred, are now re-united in
" their universal joy: he who can call himself
" a Frenchman is proud of the name; the
" ancient lustre of the crown is renewed, and
" France obeys with pride the descendant of
" her native kings.

" It is through me that this glorious day
" has arrived, and, nevertheless, I share not in
" the public happiness. My heart is changed,
" my guilty heart flies far from this holy so-
" lemnity, and it is towards the English camp,
" towards our enemies, that all my thoughts
" are turned. I should steal away from the
" joyous circle that surrounds me, in order to
" hide from all the fault that weighs upon my
" heart. Who? I! the deliverer of my coun-
" try, animated by the ray of Heaven, must I

" acknowledge an earthly flame? I, the sol-
" dier of the Most High! must I burn for the
" enemy of France? Can I yet behold the
" chaste light of the sun?

" Alas! how this music intoxicates me!
" The softest sounds recall to me his voice,
" and their enchantment seems to present his
" features to me. Let the storm of war be
" renewed; let the shock of lances re-echo
" around me; in the ardour of the fight I shall
" find again my lost courage; but these har-
" monious concords insinuate themselves into
" my bosom, and change into melancholy all
" the powers of my heart.

" Ah! wherefore then have I beheld this
" noble countenance? From that moment, I
" became culpable. Unhappy woman! God
" makes choice of a blind instrument, it was
" with blinded eyes thou shouldst have obeyed
" him. Thou hast looked—it is enough—the
" peace of God is withdrawn from thee, and
" the snares of hell have laid hold on thee.
" Ah! my simple crook, wherefore did I ex-
" change thee for the sword? Wherefore,
" Queen of Heaven, didst thou appear to me?
" Wherefore did I hear thy voice in the forest
" of oaks? Take back thy crown, I cannot

" deserve it. Yes, I see Heaven open, I be-
" hold the blessed saints, and yet my hopes
" are directed towards the earth! Oh! holy
" Virgin, thou didst impose this cruel service
" upon me; could I have hardened this heart,
" which Heaven created, to love? If thou
" wilt manifest thy power, take for thine in-
" struments those who, disentangled from
" sin, inhabit thine eternal dwelling place;
" send thine immortal and holy spirits, stran-
" gers alike to passion and to tears. But
" make not choice of a feeble girl, make not
" choice of the weak heart of a shepherd maid.
" What were to me the destinies of battles,
" and the quarrels of princes? Thou hast
" troubled my life, thou hast dragged me into
" royal palaces, and there have I found se-
" duction and error. Ah! it was not I that
" would have chosen such a fate!"

This soliloquy is a grand achievement of poetry; one pervading sentiment naturally brings us back to the same expressions: and it is in that very respect that the verse agrees so well with the affections of the soul; for it transforms into delicious harmony what might appear monotonous in the simple language of prose. The distraction of Joan of Arc goes

on always increasing. The honours they render her, the gratitude they testify for her, nothing is capable of re-assuring her, now that she feels herself abandoned by the all-powerful hand which had raised her up. At last her fatal presentiments are accomplished, and in what manner!

In order to conceive the terrible effect of an accusation of witchcraft, we must transport ourselves to those ages in which the suspicion of this mysterious crime was ever ready to fix upon all extraordinary events. The belief of a principle of evil, such as it then existed, supposed the possibility of a frightful worship paid to the powers of hell; the terrifying objects of nature were the symbol, and grotesque signs and characters the language of this worship. All worldly prosperity, of which the cause was unknown, was attributed to this demoniacal contract. The word magic designated the unbounded empire of evil, as providence was applied to the dominion of infinite happiness. This imprecation, *she is a witch, he is a sorcerer,* become ridiculous in our days, made men shudder with horror a few centuries ago; all the most sacred ties were broken when these words

were uttered; no courage could brave them, and the disorder with which they affected all spirits was such, that it might have been said, the demons of hell appeared in reality, when they fancied they saw them appear.

The unhappy fanatic, Joan of Arc's father, is seized by this prevailing superstition; and far from being proud of his daughter's glory, he presents himself voluntarily amidst the knights and lords of the court, to accuse her of witchcraft. Immediately, every heart is frozen with fear; the knights, companions in arms of the heroine, press her to justify herself, and she remains silent. The king questions her, and still she remains silent. The archbishop conjures her to swear her innocence on the crucifix, and she remains silent. She will not defend herself against the crime of which she is falsely accused, while she feels herself guilty of another crime, which her heart cannot forgive itself.

Thunder is heard, the people are overwhelmed with terror, and Joan of Arc is banished from the empire she has just preserved. No man dares come near her. The crowd disperses; the unhappy victim quits the town, and wanders about in the fields; over-

come by fatigue, she accepts a refreshing beverage: when the child who presents it, recollects her, and snatches from her hands, this feeble consolation. It is as if the blasts of hell, with which she is thought to be surrounded, had been capable of defiling whatever she touched, and of plunging headlong into the eternal gulph whatever person dared to assist her. At last, pursued from one place of refuge to another, she who delivered France, falls into the power of its enemies.

Up to this point, this *romantic tragedy* (*tragédie romantique*), it is so that Schiller has styled it, is filled with beauties of the highest order; some tedious details may be found in it (this is a fault from which the Gernian writers are never exempt;) but events of such remarkable importance are made to pass before our eyes, that the imagination exalts itself to their elevation, and, judging of this piece no longer as a work of art, we are brought to consider the marvellous picture which it presents to us as a new reflection of the holy inspiration of the heroine. The only serious defect with which this lyrical drama is to be reproached, is the denouement; instead of adopting that with which history furnished

him, Schiller supposes that Joan of Arc, put in chains by the English, miraculously bursts her fetters, rejoins the French camp, decides the victory in their favour, and receives a mortal wound. The mavellous in invention, placed by the side of the marvellous transmitted to us by history, robs the subject of a great part of its seriousness. Besides, what could be more noble than the conduct and the very answers, of Joan of Arc, when condemned at Rouen by the great English barons and the Norman bishops?

History records that this young girl united the most immoveable courage to the most touching sorrow; she wept like a woman, but conducted herself like a hero. She was accused of having abandoned herself to superstitious practices, and she repelled this charge with arguments such as an enlightened person of our days might make use of: but constantly persisting in declaring that she had had secret revelations, which decided her in the choice of her career. Overcome by horror of the punishment which threatened her, she gave constant testimony, before the English, of the virtues of the King of France, even though he had abandoned her. Her death is

neither that of a warrior nor of a martyr; but, through the softness and timidity of her sex, she displayed in her last moments a force of inspiration almost equally astonishing with that, the supposition of which had brought down upon her the charge of witchcraft. However this might be, the simple recital of her end causes a much stronger emotion than the catastrophe imagined by Schiller. When poetry takes upon herself to add to the lustre of an historical personage, she is bound at least carefully to preserve the physiognomy which characterises it; for greatness is really striking only when it is known how to give it a natural air. Now, in the subject of Joan of Arc, the real history not only has more of nature, but more of grandeur, in it than the fictitious.

"The Bride of Messina" was composed according to a dramatic system, altogether different from that which Schiller had till then followed, and to which he happily returned. It was in order to admit chorusses on the stage that he chose a subject in which there is nothing of novelty but the names; for it is, fundamentally, the same thing as the "Frères Ennemis." Schiller has merely added

to it a sister, whom her two brothers fall in love with, ignorant that she is their sister, and one kills the other from jealousy. This situation, terrible in itself, is intermingled with chorusses, which make a part of the piece. These are the servants of the two brothers, who interrupt and congeal the interest by their mutual discussions. The lyric poetry, which they recite, all at the same time, is superb; yet are they not the less, whatever may be said of it, chorusses of chamberlains. The assembled people alone possesses that independant dignity which constitutes it an impartial spectator. The chorus ought to represent posterity. If it were animated by personal affections, it would necessarily become ridiculous; for it would be inconceivable how several different persons should say the same thing at the same time, if their voices were not supposed to be the unerring interpreters of eternal truths.

Schiller, in the preface to his "Bride of Messina," complains, with reason, that our modern usages no longer possess those popular forms which rendered them so poetical among the ancients.

"The courts of justice," "he says "are closed;

"our tribunals are no longer erected in the "open air before the city gates; written "pleadings have taken place of living speech; "the people itself, that mass, so powerful "and so conspicuous, is hardly any thing "more than an abstract idea, and the divini- "ties of mortals exist only in their hearts. A "poet must throw open the courts, replace "the judges under the canopy of Heaven, "restore the statues of the Gods, reanimate "in short, those images which have every "where made way for ideas."

This desire of another time, another country, is a poetical sentiment. The religious man has need of heaven, and the poet of another earth: but it is difficult to say what religion, or what epoch, is represented to us by the "Bride of Messina;" it departs from modern manners, without placing us in the times of antiquity. The poet has confounded all religions together, and this confusion destroys the high unity of tragedy, that of an all-directing destiny. The events are atrocious, and yet the horror they inspire is of a tranquil cast. The dialogue is as long, as diffuse, as if it were the business of all to speak fine verses, and as if one loved, and were jealous,

and hated one's brother, and killed him, without ever departing from the sphere of general reflections and philosophical sentiments.

"The Bride of Messina" displays, nevertheless, some admirable traces of the fine genius of Schiller. When one of the brothers has been killed by the other, who is jealous of him, the dead body is brought into the mother's palace; she is yet ignorant that she has lost a son, and it is announced to her by the chorus which walks before the bier, in the following words:

"On all sides misery pervades our towns.
"She wanders silently around the habitations
"of men; to-day she knocks at this gate, to-
"morrow at that; none is spared. The sad
"and fatal messenger will sooner or later
"pass over the threshold of every living
"creature. When the leaves fall in their due
"season, when old men descend, through
"weakness, into their tombs, nature peace-
"ably obeys her ancient laws, her eternal
"custom, and man is not affrighted by it; but,
"on this earth, it is unforeseen misfortune
"that is to be dreaded. Murder breaks,
"with a violent hand, the most sacred ties,
"and death comes to bear us away, while

" flourishing in youth, in the Stygian bark.
" When the clouds, heaped upon one another,
" cover the face of heaven with mourn-
" ing, when the thunder resounds in their
" abysses, all hearts acknowledge the tre-
" mendous power of destiny; yet may the
" flaming thunderbolt fall from cloudless
" heights, and misfortune draw near, like a
" crafty foe, in the midst of our days of
" festival.

" Attach not thy heart, therefore, to those
" goods which form the ornament of transitory
" life. If it be thy lot to enjoy, learn how to
" lose, and if fortune waits upon thee, think
" upon grief."

When the brother learns that the object of his love, for which he had slain his brother, is his sister, his despair knows no bounds, and he resolves to die. His mother offers to pardon him, his sister entreats him to live; but a sentiment of envy mixes with his remorse, and renders him still jealous of him that is no more.

" My mother," he says, " when the same
" tomb shall enclose the murderer and the
" victim, when the same vault shall cover
" their mingled ashes, thy curse will be

" disarmed of its power. Thy tears will flow " for both sons alike: death is a mighty " mediator! She extinguishes the flames of " wrath, she reconciles enemies, and pity " leans, like a compassionate sister, on the " urn which she embraces."

His mother again conjures him not to abandon her.—" No," he says, " I cannot live " with a broken heart. I must find joy again " and seek an union with the free spirits of " air. Envy empoisoned my youth; yet didst " thou justly divide thy love between us. " Thinkest thou that I can now endure the " advantage which thy regrets give my " brother over me? death sanctifies us; in " his undestructible palace, that which was " mortal and defiled, is changed into a pure " and shining crystal; the errors of miserable " human nature vanish. My brother must be " superior to me in thy heart, as necessarily " as the stars are over the earth, and the an- " cient rivalry which divided us during life " would be born again to devour me without " respite. He would be beyond this world, " he would be the cherished, the immortal " child of thy remembrance."

The jealousy inspired by the dead is a

sentiment full of refinement and truth. Who, in short, can triumph over regret? Will the living ever equal the beauty of that celestial image, which the friend who is no more has left engraven on our heart? Has he not said to us,—Forget me not? Is he not defenceless? where does he exist upon this earth, if not in the sanctuary of our soul? and who, among the happy of this world, can ever unite himself to us so intimately as his memory?

CHAPTER XX.

William Tell.

SCHILLER'S "William Tell" is clothed with those lively and brilliant colours which transport the imagination into the picturesque regions that gave birth to the venerable confederacy of the Rütli. In the very first verses we fancy ourselves to hear the horns of the Alps resound. The clouds which intersect the mountains and hide the lower earth from that which is nearer heaven; the chamois hunters pursuing their active prey from precipice to precipice; the life, at once pastoral and military, which contends with nature and remains at peace with men; every thing inspires an animated interest for Switzerland; and the unity of action, in this tragedy, consists in the art of making of the nation itself a dramatic character.

The boldness of Tell is brilliantly displayed in the first act of the piece. An unhappy

outlaw, devoted to death by one of the subaltern tyrants of Switzerland, endeavours to save himself on the opposite side of the Lake, where he thinks he may find an asylum. The storm is so violent that no boatman dares risk the passage to conduct him to it. Tell sees his distress, exposes himself with him to the danger of the waves, and succeeds in landing him safely on the shore. Tell is a stranger to the conspiracy which the insolence of Gessler has excited. Stauffacher, Walther Fürst, and Arnold de Melchtal lay the foundation of the revolt. Tell is its hero, but not its author; he does not think about politics, and dreams of tyranny only when it disturbs his tranquil existence; he repels it with the force of his arm when he feels its aggression; he judges, he condemns it before his own tribunal; but he does not conspire.

Arnold de Melchtal, one of the conspirators, has retreated to Walther's house, having been obliged to quit his father that he might escape the satellites of Gessler; he is troubled at the reflection that he has left him alone; he asks anxiously for news of him, when, on a sudden, he learns that, to punish the old man for his son's having withdrawn himself from

the judgment pronounced against him, the barbarians have deprived him of sight with a red hot iron. What despair, what rage, can equal that which he feels! It becomes necessary that he should revenge himself. If he delivers his country, it is to put to death the tyrants who have blinded his father; and when the three conspirators bind themselves by a solemn oath to die or to set free their fellow citizens from the frightful yoke of Gessler, Arnold exclaims,

"Oh my old blind father, thou canst never "behold the day of thy deliverance, but our "rallying shouts shall reach thine ears. "When from Alps to Alps the blazing bea- "cons shall call us to arms, thou shalt hear "the citadels of tyranny fall in ruins around "thee. The natives of Switzerland in press- "ing around thy cabin, shall make their "transports of joy re-echo in thine ears, and "the beams of that day of festival shall pene- "trate even through the darkness that en- "compasses thee."

The third act is filled by the principal action, both of the real history, and of the drama. Gessler has had a hat raised on a spear's head in the middle of the public square,

with an order that all the country people shall pay it salutation. Tell passes before this hat without conforming to the will of the Austrian governor; but it is only from inadvertence that he has not submitted to it, for it was not in the character of Tell, at least in that which Schiller has assigned him, to manifest any political opinion: wild and independent as the deer of the mountains, he lived free, but did not enquire into the right by which he did so. At the moment of Tell's being charged with his neglect of the salutation, Gessler arrives, bearing a hawk on his wrist: this single circumstance stamps the picture, and transports us into the middle ages. The terrible power of Gessler forms a striking contrast to the simple manners of the Swiss, and one is astonished at this tyranny exercised in the open air, with the hills and vallies for its solitary witnesses.

Tell's disobedience is related to Gessler, and Tell excuses himself by affirming that it was unintentionally and through ignorance that he did not perform the enjoined act of salutation. Gessler, still irritated, says to him, after some moments of silence, "Tell, they, "inform me that thou art a master in the art

" of shooting with the crossbow, and that thy " bolt never failed to hit its mark." The son of Tell, twelve years of age, proud of his father's skill, exclaims, " This, sir, is true; " he can cleave an apple on the tree at a hun- " dred paces distant." " Is that thy child?" asks Gessler: " Yes, sir," replies Tell. (Gessler)—" Hast thou any more children?" (Tell)—" Two boys, sir." (Gessler) " which of the two is most dear to thee?" (Tell) " They are both of them my children." (Gessler)—" Well—since thou canst cleave " an apple on the tree, a hundred paces dis- " tant, display thy talent before me; take " thy cross bow, which is now in thy hand, " and prepare to shoot at an apple on the " head of thy son; but, I advise thee, look " to it well, for if thou dost neither hit " the apple nor thy son, thou diest." (Tell.) " Sir, what horrible action is this that you " command me? Who! I, let fly an arrow " against my child? No, no, you do not " intend it. God preserve you from it! It is " not in seriousness, sir, that you require this " of a father." (Gessler) " Thou shalt shoot " at the apple on the head of thy son—I re- " quire it, and I will have it so." (Tell) " I

" aim at the cherished head of my child? Ah! " rather die!" (Gessler)—" Thou shalt " shoot, or perish instantly, and thy son with " thee." (Tell) " I become the murderer of " my boy! Sir you have no children—you " know not what is in the heart of a father." (Gessler) " Ah, Tell! thou art become wise " on a sudden; they told me thou wert a " dreamer, one who loves the marvellous— " Well, I give thee the opportunity; make " trial of this daring exploit, which is truly " worthy of thee."

All who surround Gessler have compassion on Tell, and endeavour to soften the barbarian who has thus condemned him to the most frightful of punishments; the old man, the child's grandfather, throws himself at Gessler's feet; the child who is to have the apple placed on his head, raises him and says, " Kneel not before that man; let them only " tell me where to stand: I fear not for my- " self; my father reaches the bird on the " wing, his art will not fail him when his " child's heart is at hazard." Stauffacher advances, and says, " Sir, does not the " innocence of this child move you?" (Gessler) " Bind him to that linden tree." (The

Child) " Wherefore bind me? Leave me " free, and I will hold myself as still as a " lamb, but if they try to chain me, I will " struggle violently." Rodolph, Gessler's squire, says to the child, " Consent at least to " let them bind your eyes." " No," replies the boy, " no; do you imagine that I fear the " arrow which is about to part from my " father's hand? I shall not even wink at its " approach. Come on, my father, shew how " well you can draw the bow; they do not " believe it, and flatter themselves with our " destruction. Well—frustrate then their " evil hope; let the arrow fly, and let it reach " its mark.—Come on!"

The child places himself beneath the linden tree, and the apple is put upon his head; then the Swiss again press around Gessler, to obtain the pardon of Tell. " Didst thou ima- " gine," says Gessler, addressing himself to Tell, " didst thou imagine that thou couldst " with impunity practise the use of murder- " ous weapons? They are dangerous, even " for the bearer also; this insolent right of " going armed, which the peasants arrogate " to themselves, offends the master of these " regions: he who commands, alone ought to

" be armed. You, who rejoice so much in " your bow and arrows, know that it is for " me to give you a mark at which to direct " them."—" Make way," cries Tell, " make " way!"—All the spectators shudder. He tries to bend his bow, his strength fails him; a mist overshadows his eyes; he entreats Gessler to grant him death. Gessler is inflexible. Tell hesitates yet for a considerable time in a state of frightful anxiety, sometimes looking at Gessler, sometimes towards Heaven, then, on a sudden, he draws a second arrow out of his quiver, and places it in his girdle. He bends forward, as if to follow the arrow which he sends forth; it flies—the people cry, " May the child live!" The child darts into his father's arms, and says, " My father, " here is the apple which thine arrow hath " cleft; I well knew that it would not hurt " me." The father falls senseless to the earth with the child in his arms. His companions raise and congratulate him. Gessler draws near, and asks him with what design he had prepared a second shaft. Tell refuses to inform him. Gessler insists. Tell asks a protection for his life if he shall answer truly; Gessler grants it. Tell then, looking at him with the

eye of vengeance, says to him, " I would have " shot this arrow at thee, if the first had hit " my son; and, believe me, this would not " have failed." Gessler, furious at these words, orders Tell to be thrown into prison.

This scene possesses, as may be seen, all the simplicity of an historical event related in an ancient chronicle.

William Tell is not represented as a tragic hero: he did not think of braving Gessler: he resembles, in all things, what the peasants of Switzerland generally are found to be, calm in their habits, lovers of repose, but terrible whenever those feelings are excited in their souls, which slumber in the retirement of a country life. We are still shewn, near Altorf, in the Canton of Uri, a stone statue of coarse workmanship, representing Tell and his son after the apple has been pierced. The father holds his son by one hand, and with the other presses the bow to his heart, as if to thank it for having served him so well.

Tell is put in chains into the same boat in which Gessler passes the Lake of Lucerne; the storm bursts during the passage; the barbarian is struck with fear, and asks his victim to succour him: Tell's chains are

unbound; he guides the bark himself in the midst of the storm, and as he draws near the rocks, leaps swiftly on the craggy shore. The recital of this event begins the fourth act. Hardly has he reached his home, when Tell is informed that he must not expect to live there in peace with his wife and children, and he then takes the resolution of putting Gessler to death. His end is not to free his country from a foreign yoke, he scarcely knows whether Austria ought, or ought not, to govern Switzerland; he knows, however, that man has been unjust to man; he knows that a father has been compelled to shoot an arrow near the heart of his child, and he thinks that the author of such a crime deserves to die.

His soliloquy is extremely fine: he shudders at the murder, and yet has no doubt of the lawfulness of his resolution. He compares the innocent purposes for which he has hitherto employed his arrow at the chase and in sport, with the terrible action that he is about to commit: he sits on a stone bench to wait at the turn of a road for Gessler, who is about to pass by: "Here," says he, "does "the pilgrim rest, and continues his journey

" after a short repose; the pious monk, on his " way to perform a holy mission; the mer- " chant, who comes from distant countries, " and takes this road to conduct him to the " other extremity of the world: all pursue " their road to the accomplishment of the " business that concerns them, and my busi- " ness is murder! Heretofore the father never " returned to his home without gladdening his " children, by bringing to them some Alpine " flowers, a rare bird, or a precious fossil, " such as are found upon the mountains; and " now is the same father seated on a rock, " while thoughts of death occupy his soul; " he seeks the life of his enemy, but seeks " it for you, my children, to protect you, to " defend you: it is to save your days and " your sweet innocence, that he draws his " avenging bow."

Shortly afterwards, Gessler is perceived from a distance descending the mountain. An unhappy woman, whose husband is languishing in one of his prisons, throws herself at his feet, and conjures him to grant her his liberation; he contemns and repulses her; she still insists; she seizes his horse's bridle, and demands of him either to trample her under

foot, or to restore to her him she loves. Gessler, indignant at her complaints, reproaches himself for having yet indulged the people of Switzerland with too great a portion of liberty. "I will break," he says, "their ob-
"stinate resistance; I will curb their auda-
"cious spirit of independence, I will promul-
"gate a new law in the country; I will"..... As he pronounces this word, the mortal shaft reaches him; he falls, exclaiming, "It is the "arrow of Tell." "Thou mayest well re-
"collect it," cries Tell, from the top of the rock. The acclamations of the people are soon heard, and the deliverers of Switzerland accomplish the vow they had made, to rid themselves of the yoke of Austria.

It seems that the piece should naturally end here, as that of Mary Stuart at her death; but, in each, Schiller has added a sort of appendix or explanation, which can be no more listened to after the principal catastrophe is terminated. Elizabeth reappears after Mary's execution; we are made to witness her grief and vexation at hearing that Leicester has taken his departure for France. This poetical justice ought to have been supposed, and not represented; the spectator cannot bear the

sight of Elizabeth, after witnessing the last moments of Mary. In the fifth act of "William Tell," John the Parricide, who assassinated his uncle Albert, because he refused him his birth-right, comes disguised as a monk, to demand an asylum of Tell; he persuades himself that their acts are similar, and Tell repulses him with horror, shewing him how different were their motives. The putting these two characters in opposition to each other, is a just and ingenious idea; yet this contrast, so pleasing in the closet, does not answer on the stage. Genius is of very little importance in dramatic effects; it is necessary for the purpose of preparing them, but if it were also required for the purpose of feeling them, this is a task to which even the most refined audience would be found unequal.

On the stage, the additional act of John the Parricide is suppressed, and the curtain falls at the moment when Gessler's heart is pierced by the arrow. A short time after the first representation of "William Tell," the fatal shaft struck also the worthy author of this noble performance. Gessler perished at the moment when he was occupied by the most barbarous intentions. The soul of Schiller

was filled with generous ideas. These two states of mind, so contrary to each other, were equally interrupted by death, the common enemy of all human projects.

CHAPTER XX.

Goetz of Berlichingen, and the Count of Egmont.

THE dramatic career of Goëthe may be considered in two different lights. The pieces he designed for representation have much grace and facility, but nothing more. In those of his dramatic works, on the contrary, which it is very difficult to perform, we discover extraordinary talent. The genius of Goëthe cannot bound itself to the limits of the theatre; and, endeavouring to subject itself to them, it loses a portion of originality, and does not entirely recover it till again at liberty to mix all styles together as it chooses. No art, whatever it be, can exist without certain limits; painting, sculpture, architecture, are subject to their own peculiar laws, and in like manner the dramatic art produces its effect only under certain conditions; conditions which sometimes restrain both thought and feeling; and yet the influence of the theatre

is so great upon the assembled audience, that one is not justified in refusing to employ the power it possesses, by the pretext that it exacts sacrifices which the imagination left to itself would not require. As there is no metropolis in Germany to collect together all that is necessary to form a good theatre, dramatic works are much oftener read than performed: and thence it follows that authors compose their dramas with a view to the effect in reading, not in acting.

Goëthe is almost always making new experiments in literature. When the German taste appears to him to lean towards an excess in any respect, he immediately endeavours to give it an opposite direction. He may be said to govern the understandings of his contemporaries, as an empire of his own, and his works may be called decrees, by turns authorizing or banishing the abuses of art.

Goëthe was tired of the imitation of French pieces in Germany, and with reason; for even a Frenchman might be equally tired of it. He therefore composed an historical tragedy, in the manner of Shakspeare, Goetz of Berlichingen. This piece was not destined for the stage; but it is nevertheless capable of repre-

sentation, as are all those of Shakspeare of the same description. Goëthe has chosen the same historical epoch as Schiller in his play of the Robbers; but instead of presenting a man who has set himself free from all the ties of moral and social order, he has painted an old knight, under the reign of Maximilian, still defending the chivalrous manners and the feudal condition of the nobility, which gave so high an ascendant to their personal valour.

Goetz of Berlichingen was surnamed "the "iron-handed," because having lost his right hand in war, he had one made for him with springs, by the aid of which he held and managed his lance with dexterity: he was a knight renowned in his time for courage and loyalty. This model is happily chosen to represent what was the independence of the nobles before the authority of the government became coercive on all men. In the middle ages, every castle was a fortress, every noble a sovereign. The establishment of standing armies, and the invention of artillery, effected a total change in social order; a sort of abstract power was introduced under the name of the state or the nation; but individuals lost, by degrees, all their importance. A character

like that of Goetz must have suffered from this change whenever it took place.

The military spirit has always been of a ruder cast in Germany than any where else, and it is there that we might figure to ourselves, as real, those men of iron whose images are still to be seen in the arsenals of the empire. Yet the simplicity of chivalrous manners is painted in Goëthe's tragedy with many charms. This aged Goetz, living in the midst of battles, sleeping in his armour, continually on horseback, never resting except when besieged, employing all his resources for war; contemplating nothing besides; this aged Goetz, I say, gives us the highest idea of the interest and activity which human life possessed in those ages. His virtues, as well as his defects, are strongly marked; nothing is more generous than his regard for Weislingen, once his friend, then his adversary, and often engaged even in acts of treason against him. The sensibility shewn by an intrepid warrior, awakens the soul in an entirely new manner; we have time to love in our inactive state of existence; but these lightnings of passion which enable us to read in the bottom of the heart through the medium

of a stormy existence cause a sentiment of profound emotion. We are so afraid of meeting with affectation in the noblest gift of heaven, sensibility, that we sometimes prefer in the expression of it even rudeness itself as the pledge of sincerity.

The wife of Goetz presents herself to the imagination like an old portrait of the Flemish school, in which the dress, the look, the very tranquillity of the attitude, announce a woman submitted to the will of her husband, knowing him only, admiring him only, and believing herself destined to serve him, as he is to defend her. By way of contrast to this most excellent woman, we have a creature altogether perverse, Adelaide, who seduces Weislingen, and makes him fail in the promise he had given to his friend; she marries, and soon after proves faithless to him. She renders herself passionately beloved by her page, and bewilders the imagination of this unhappy young man to such a degree as to prevail upon him to give a poisoned cup to his master. These features are strong, but perhaps it is true that when the manners of a nation are generally very pure, the woman who estranges herself from them soon be-

comes entirely corrupted; the desire of pleasing is in our days no more than a tie of affection and kindness; but in the strict domestic life of a former age, it was an error capable of involving all others in its consequences. This guilty Adelaide gives occasion to one of the finest scenes in the play, the sitting of the secret tribunal.

Mysterious judges, unknown to one another, always masked, and meeting at night, punished in silence, and only engraved on the poniard which they plunged into the bosom of the culprit this terrible motto: THE SECRET TRIBUNAL. They acquainted the condemned person with his sentence by having it cried three times under his window, Woe, woe, woe! Thus was the unfortunate man given to know that, every where, in the stranger, in the fellow citizen, in the kinsman even, he might find his murderer. In the crowd, and in solitude, in the city, and in the country, all places were filled by the invisible presence of that armed conscience which prosecuted the guilty. One may conceive how necessary this terrible institution might have been, at a time when every man was powerful against all men, instead of all being in-

vested with the power which they ought to possess over each individual. It was necessary that justice should surprise the criminal before he was able to defend himself; but this punishment which hovered in the air like an avenging shade, this mortal sentence which might be harboured even in the bosom of a friend, inspired an invincible terror.

There is another fine situation,—that in which Goetz, in order to defend himself in his castle, commands the lead to be stripped from the windows to melt into balls. There is in this character a contempt of futurity, and an intenseness of strength at the present moment that are altogether admirable. At last, Goetz, beholds all his companions in arms perish; he remains wounded, a prisoner, and having only his wife and sister left by his side. He is surrounded by women alone, he who desired to live among men, among men of unconquerable spirits, that he might exert with them the force of his character and the strength of his arm. He thinks on the name that he must leave behind him; he reflects now that he is about to die. He asks to behold the sun once more, he thinks on God, who never before occupied his thoughts, but

of whose existence he never doubted, and dies with gloomy courage, regretting his warlike pleasures more than life itself.

This play is much liked in Germany; the national manners and customs of times of old, are faithfully represented by it, and whatever touches on ancient chivalry moves the hearts of the Germans. Goëthe, the most careless of all men, because he is sure of leading the taste of his audience, did not give himself the trouble even of putting his play into verse; it is the sketch of a great picture, but hardly enough finished even as a sketch. One perceives in the writer so great an impatience of all that can be thought to bear a resemblance to affectation, that he disdains even the art that is necessary to give a durable form to his compositions. There are marks of genius scattered here and there through his drama, like the touches of Michael Angelo's pencil; but it is a work defective, or rather which makes us feel the want of many things. The reign of Maximilian, during which the principal event is supposed to pass, is not sufficiently marked. In short, we may venture to censure the author for not having enough exercised his Imagination in the form

and language of the piece. It is true that he has intentionally and systematically abstained from indulging it; he wished the drama to be the action itself; forgetting that the charm of the ideal is that which ought to preside over all things in dramatic works. The characters of tragedies are always in danger of being either common or factitious, and it is incumbent on genius to preserve them equally from each extreme. Shakspeare, in his historical pieces, never ceases to be a poet, nor Racine to observe with exactness the manners of the Hebrews in his lyrical tragedy of Athalie. The dramatic talent can dispense neither with nature nor with art; art is totally distinct from artifice, it is a perfectly true and spontaneous inspiration, which spreads an universal harmony over particular circumstances, and the dignity of lasting remembrances over fleeting moments.

"The Count of Egmont" appears to me the finest of Goëthe's tragedies; he wrote it, I believe, at the same time, when he composed Werther; the same warmth of soul is alike perceptible in both. The play begins at the moment when Philip II. weary of the mild government of Margaret of Parma, in the

Low Countries, sends the Duke of Alva to supply her place. The king is troubled by the popularity which the Prince of Orange and the Count of Egmont have acquired; he suspects them of secretly favouring the partizans of the reformation. Every thing is brought together that can furnish the most attractive idea of the Count of Egmont; he is seen adored by the soldiers at the head of whom he has borne away so many victories. The Spanish princess trusts his fidelity, even though she knows how much he censures the severity that has been employed against the Protestants. The citizens of Brussels look on him as the defender of their liberties before the throne; and to complete the picture, the Prince of Orange, whose profound policy and silent wisdom are so well known in history sets off still more the generous imprudence of Egmont, in vainly entreating him to depart with himself before the arrival of the Duke of Alva. The prince of Orange is a wise and noble character; an heroic but inconsiderate self-devotion can alone resist his counsels. The Count of Egmont resolves not to abandon the inhabitants of Brussels; he trusts himself to his fate, because his victories have

taught him to reckon upon the favours of fortune, and he always preserves in public business the same qualities that have thrown so much brilliancy over his military character. These noble and dangerous qualities interest us in his destiny; we feel on his account fears which his intrepid soul never allowed him to experience for himself; the general effect of his character is displayed with great art in the impression which it is made to produce on all the different persons by whom he is surrounded. It is easy to trace a lively portrait of the hero of a piece; it requires more talent to make him act and speak conformably to this portrait, and more still to make him known by the admiration that he inspires in the soldiers, the people, the great nobility, in all that bear any relation to him.

The Count of Egmont is in love with a young girl, Clara, born in the class of citizens at Brussels; he goes to visit her in her obscure retreat. This love has a larger place in the heart of the young girl than in his own; the imagination of Clara is entirely subdued by the lustre of the Count of Egmont, by the dazzling impression of his heroic valour and brilliant reputation. There are goodness and

gentleness in the love of Egmont; in the society of this young person he finds repose from trouble and solicitude. "They speak "to you," he says, "of this Egmont, silent, "severe, authoritative; who is made to "struggle with events and with mankind; "but he who is simple, loving, confiding, "happy, that Egmont, Clara, is thine." The love of Egmont for Clara would not be sufficient for the interest of the piece; but when misfortune is joined to it, this sentiment which before appeared only in the distance, acquires an admirable strength.

The arrival of the Spaniards with the Duke of Alva at their head being made known, the terror spread by that gloomy nation amongst the joyous people of Brussels is described in a superior manner.—At the approach of a violent storm, men retire to their houses, animals tremble, birds take a low flight, and seem to seek an asylum in the earth—all nature seems to prepare itself to meet the scourge which threatens it—thus terror possessed the minds of the unfortunate inhabitants of Flanders. The Duke of Alva is not willing to have the Count of Egmont arrested in the streets of Brussels, he fears an insurrection

of the people, and wishes if possible to draw his victim to his own palace, which commands the city, and adjoins the citadel. He employs his own son, young Ferdinand, to prevail on the man he wishes to ruin, to enter his abode. Ferdinand is an enthusiastic admirer of the hero of Flanders, he has no suspicion of the horrid designs of his father, and displays a warmth and ardour of character which persuades the Count of Egmont that the father of *such* a son, cannot be his enemy. Egmont consents to accompany him to the Duke of Alva; that perfidious and faithful representative of Philip II. expects him with an impatience which makes one shudder: he places himself at the window, and perceives him at a distance, mounted on a superb horse, which he had taken in one of his victorious battles: the Duke of Alva feels a cruel and increasing joy at every step which Egmont makes towards his palace;—when the horse stops, he is agitated—his guilty heart pants to effect his criminal purpose, and when Egmont enters the court he cries; "one foot is in the toil; "another step! the grated entrance closes on "him, and now! he is mine!"—the Count of Egmont having entered, the Duke discourses

with him for some time on the government of the Low Countries, and on the necessity of employing rigour to restrain the progress of the new opinions; he has no longer any interest in deceiving Egmont, and yet he feels a pleasure in the success of his craftiness, and wishes still to enjoy it a few moments:—at length he rouzes the generous soul of Egmont, and irritates him by disputation in order to draw from him some violent expressions:—he affects to be provoked by them, and performs, as by a sudden impulse, what he had calculated on and determined to do long before. Why so many precautions with a man who is already in his power, and whom he has determined to deprive, in a few hours, of existence?—It is because the political assassin always retains a confused desire of justifying himself, even in the eyes of his victim—he wishes to say something in his excuse even when all he can allege persuades neither himself nor any other person. Perhaps no man is capable of entering on a criminal act without some subterfuge, and therefore the true morality of dramatic works consists not in poetical justice which the author dispenses as he thinks fit, and of which history so often shews us the fallacy, but in the art of painting

vice and virtue in such colours as to inspire us with hatred to the one and love to the other.

The report of the Count of Egmont's arrest was scarcely spread through Brussels before it is known that he must perish. No one expects that justice will be heard, his terrified adherents ventured not a word in his defence, and suspicion soon separates those whom the same interest had before united. An apparent submission arises from the terror which every individual feels and inspires in his turn, and the panic which pervades them all, that popular cowardice which so quickly succeeds a state of unusual exaltation, is in this part of the work most admirably described.—Clara alone, that timid girl who scarcely ever ventured to leave her own abode, appears in the public square at Brussels, reassembles by her cries the citizens who had dispersed, recalls to their recollection the enthusiasm which the name of Egmont had inspired, the oath they had taken to die for him—all who heard her shudder,—"Young woman," says a citizen of Brussels, "speak "not of Egmont, his name is fatal to us."—"What! shall I not pronounce his name?" cried Clara, "have you not all invoked it a "thousand times? is it not written on every

" thing around us? have I not seen its brilliant
" characters traced even by the stars of
" Heaven? shall I not then name it? — Worthy
" people? what are you about? is your mind
" perplexed, your reason lost? look not upon
" me with that unquiet and apprehensive air,
" cast not down your eyes in terror; what I
" demand is also what you yourselves de-
" sire; is not my voice the voice of your own
" heart? ask of each other—which of you
" will not this very night prostrate himself
" before God to beg the life of Egmont?
" which of you in his own house will not
" repeat, 'The liberty of Egmont, or death?"

A CITIZEN OF BRUSSELS.

" God forbid that we should listen to you
" any longer; some dreadful misfortune would
" be the consequence of it.

CLARA.

" Stay, stay! do not leave me because I
" speak of him whom with so much ardour
" you press'd forward to meet when public
" report announced his arrival, when each of
" you exclaimed, Egmont comes! he comes!
" then, the inhabitants of the streets through
" which he was to pass, esteemed themselves
" happy; as soon as the footstep of his horse
" was heard, each abandoned his labour to

" run out to meet him, and the beam which " shot from his eye, coloured your dejected " countenances with hope and joy. Some " among you carried their children to the " threshold of the door, and raising them in " their arms, cried out, ' Behold, this is the " great Egmont, it is he! He who will pro- " cure for you times far happier than those " which your poor fathers have endured." " Your children will demand of you, what is " become of the times which you then pro- " mised them? What! we loose our moments " in vain words! you are inactive, you betray " him!"

Brackenbourg, the friend of Clara, conjures her to go home. " What will your mother " say?" cries he.

CLARA.

" Thinkest thou that I am a child, or bereft " of my senses? no, they must listen to me: " hear me, fellow citizens: I see that you are " perplexed, and that you can scarcely recol- " lect yourselves amidst the dangers which " threaten you; suffer me to draw your at- " tention to the past—alas! even to the past " of yesterday. Think on the future; can " you live? will they suffer you to live, if he " perishes? with him the last breath of your

" liberty will be extinguished. Was he not
" every thing to you! for whom, then, did
" he expose himself to dangers without num-
" ber? his wounds—he received them for
" you; that great soul, wholly devoted to
" your service, now wastes its energies in a
" dungeon.——Murder spreads its snares
" around him; he thinks of you, perhaps he
" still hopes in you. For the first time he
" stands in need of your assistance, he, who
" to this very day, has been employed only
" in heaping on you his services and his be-
" nefactions.

A CITIZEN OF BRUSSELS *(to Brackenbourg.)*

" Send her away, she afflicts us.

CLARA.

" How, then! I have no strength, no arms
" skilful in battle as your's are; but I have
" what you want, courage and contempt of
" danger; why cannot I infuse my soul into
" your's? I will go forth in the midst of you:
" a defenceless standard has often rallied a
" noble army; my spirit shall be like a flame
" preceding your steps; enthusiasm and love
" shall at length re-unite this dispersed and
" wavering people."

Brackenbourg informs Clara that they per-

ceive not far from them some Spanish soldiers who may possibly listen to them. " My " friend," said he, " consider in what place " we are!"

CLARA.

" In what place! under that heaven whose " magnificent vault seemed to bow with com- " placency on the head of Egmont when he " appeared. Conduct me to his prison, you " know the road to the old castle; guide my " steps, I will follow you." Brackenbourg draws Clara to her own habitation, and goes out again to enquire the fate of the Count of Egmont: He returns, and Clara, whose last resolution is already taken, insists on his relating to her all that he has heard.

" Is he condemned?" (*she exclaims.*)

BRACKENBOURG.

" He is, I cannot doubt of it.

CLARA.

" Does he still live?

BRACKENBOURG.

" Yes.

CLARA.

" And how can you assure me of it? Ty- " ranny destroys the generous man during " the darkness of the night, and hides his

" blood from every eye—the people, oppres-
" sed and overwhelmed, sleep and dream that
" they will rescue him, and during that time
" his indignant spirit has already quitted this
" world. He is no more!—do not deceive
" me; he is no more!

BRACKENBOURG.

" No, I repeat it, alas! he still lives, be-
" cause the Spaniards destined for the people
" whom they mean to oppress, a terrifying
" spectacle; a sight which must break every
" heart in which the spirit of liberty still
" resides."

CLARA.

" You may now speak out: I also will
" tranquilly listen to the sentence of my
" death; I already approach the region of the
" blessed; already consolation reaches me
" from that abode of peace: Speak.

BRACKENBOURG.

" The reports which circulate, and the
" double guard, made me suspect that some-
" thing formidable was preparing this night
" on the public square. By various windings
" I got to a house, whose windows front that
" way; the wind agitated the flambeaux,

"which were borne in the hands of a numer-
"ous circle of Spanish soldiers: and as I en-
"deavoured to look through that uncertain
"light, I shuddered on perceiving a high scaf-
"fold; several people were occupied in cover-
"ing the floor with black cloth, and the steps
"of the stair-case were already invested with
"tha. funereal garb. One might have sup-
"posed they were celebrating the consecra-
"tion of some horrible sacrifice. A white
"crucifix, which during the night shone like
"silver, was placed on one side of the scaffold.
"The terrible certainty was there, before my
"eyes; but the flambeaux by degrees were
"extinguished, every object soon disappeared,
"and the criminal work of darkness retired
"again into the bosom of night."

The son of the Duke of Alva discovers that he has been made the instrument of Egmont's destruction, and he determines at all hazards to save him; Egmont demands of him only one service, which is to protect Clara when he shall be no more; but we learn that, resolved not to survive the man she loved, she has destroyed herself. Egmont is executed; and the bitter resentment which Ferdinand feels

against his father, is the punishment of the Duke of Alva, who it is said, never loved any thing on earth except that son.

It seems to me that with a few variations, it would be possible to adapt this play to the French model. I have passed over in silence some scenes which could not be introduced on our theatre. In the first place, that with which the tragedy begins: some of Egmont's soldiers, and some citizens of Brussels, are conversing together on the subject of his exploits. In a dialogue, very lively and natural, they relate the principal actions of his life, and in their language and narratives, shew the high confidence with which he had inspired them. 'Tis thus that Shakspeare prepares the entrance of Julius Cæsar; and the Camp of Walstein is composed with the same intention. But in France we should not endure a mixture of the language of the people with that of tragic dignity; and this frequently gives monotony to our second-rate tragedies. Pompous expressions, and heroic situations, are necessarily few in number: and besides, tender emotions rarely penetrate to the bottom of the soul, when the imagination is not previously captivated by those simple but true

details which give life to the smallest circumstances.

The family to which Clara belongs is represented as completely that of a citizen: her mother is extremely vulgar—he who is to marry her, is indeed passionately attached to her, but one does not like to consider Egmont as the rival of such an inferior man;—it is true that every thing which surrounds Clara serves to set off the purity of her soul, but nevertheless in France we should not allow in the dramatic art one of the first principles in that of painting, the shade which renders the light more striking. As we see both of these at once in a picture, we receive, at the same time, the effect of both—it is not the same in a theatrical performance, where the action follows in succession; the scene which hurts our feelings is not tolerated in consideration of the advantageous light it is to throw on the following scene; and we expect that the contrast shall consist in beauties, different indeed, but which shall nevertheless be beauties.

The conclusion of Goëthe's tragedy does not harmonize with the former part; the Count of Egmont falls asleep a few minutes before he ascends the scaffold. Clara, who is

dead, appears to him during his sleep, surrounded with celestial brilliancy, and informs him that the cause of liberty, which he had served so well, will one day triumph. This wonderful dénouement cannot accord with an historical performance. The Germans are, in general, embarrassed about the conclusion of their pieces; and the Chinese proverb is particularly applicable to them, which says, "When we have ten steps to take, the ninth "brings us half way." The talent necessary to finish a composition of any kind, demands a sort of cleverness, and of calculation, which agrees but badly with the vague and indefinite imagination displayed by the Germans in all their works. Besides, it requires art, and a great deal of art, to find a proper dénouement, for there are seldom any in real life: facts are linked one to the other, and their consequences are lost in the lapse of time. The knowlege of the theatre alone teaches us to circumscribe the principal event, and make all the accessary ones concur to the same purpose. But to combine effects seems to the Germans almost like hypocrisy, and the spirit of calculation appears to them irreconcilable with inspiration.

Of all their writers, however, Goëthe is certainly best able to unite the frailties of genius with its bolder flights; but he does not vouchafe to give himself the trouble of arranging dramatic situations so as to render them properly theatrical. If they are fine in themselves, he cares for nothing more. His German audience at Weimar ask no better than to wait the developement of his plans, and to guess at his intention—as patient, as intelligent, as the ancient Greek chorus, they do not expect merely to be amused as sovereigns commonly do, wether they are people or kings, they contribute to their own pleasure, by analyzing and explaining what did not at first strike them—such a public is truly like an artist in its judgments.

CHAPTER XXII.

Iphigenia in Tauris, Torquato Tasso, &c. &c.

In Germany were represented familiar comedies, melo-dramas, and grand spectacles, filled with horses and knights. Goëthe wished to bring back literature to the chaste severity of ancient times, and he composed his Iphigenia in Tauris, which is the chef d'œuvre of classical poetry among the Germans. This tragedy recalls the sort of impression which we receive in contemplating Grecian statues: the action of it is so commanding, and yet so tranquil, that even when the situation of the personages is changed, there is always in them a sort of dignity, which fixes the recollection of every moment on the memory. The subject of Iphigenia in Tauris is so well known, that it was difficult to treat it in a new manner. Goëthe has, nevertheless, succeeded in giving a character truly admirable to his heroine. The Antigone of Sophocles is

a saint, such as a religion more pure than that of the ancients might have represented to us. The Iphigenia of Goëthe has not less respect to truth than Antigone; but she unites the calmness of a philosopher with the fervor of a priestess: the chaste worship of Diana, and the asylum of a temple, satisfy that contemplative existence which the regret of being exiled from Greece imparts to her. She wishes to soften the manners of the barbarous country which she inhabits; and though her name is unknown, she sheds benefactions around her befitting a daughter of the King of Kings. Nevertheless, she ceases not to regret the beautiful country in which her infancy was passed, and her soul is filled with a firm yet gentle resignation, which it may be said holds the middle space between stoicism and Christianity. Iphigenia somewhat resembles the divinity she serves; and imagination represents her as surrounded with a cloud, which conceals from her her country. In reality, could exile, and exile far from Greece, allow any enjoyment except that which is found in the internal resources of the mind; Ovid also, when condemned to spend his days not far from Tauris, in vain uttered his harmo-

nious language to the inhabitants of those desolate shores: in vain he sought the arts, a favouring sky, and that sympathy of thought which makes us taste some of the pleasures of friendship, even in the society of those who have no responsive feeling, and would be otherwise indifferent to us. His genius recoiled on itself, and his suspended lyre breathed none but plaintive sounds, a mournful accompaniment to the northern blast. It appears to me that no modern work surpasses the Iphigenia of Goëthe in depicting the destiny which hung so heavily on the race of Tantalus, and the dignity of the misfortunes caused by an invincible fatality. A religious dread is felt through the whole narration, and the personages themselves seem to speak prophetically and to act under the immediate influence of the gods.

Goëthe has made Thoas the deliverer of Iphigenia—a ferocious character, such as many authors have represented him, would not have accorded with the general colour of the piece, he would have destroyed its harmony. In many tragedies, a tyrant is exhibited as a sort of machine on which the business of the piece depends; but the

reflecting mind of Goëthe would never have brought such a personage into action without developing his character.—Now a criminal character is always too complicated to enter properly into a subject treated in so simple a manner as this is. Thoas loves Iphigenia; he cannot resolve to separate himself from her by suffering her to return into Greece with her brother Orestes. Iphigenia might indeed depart unknown to Thoas: she debates with her brother and with herself, whether she ought to allow herself to act in so deceitful a manner, and this forms the plot or the intrigue of the last part of the piece. At length Iphigenia avows her whole design to Thoas, combats his opposition to it, and obtains from him the word—adieu,—after which the curtain drops.

Certainly the subject thus conceived is pure and noble, and it would be desirable that an audience might be interested and affected merely by a scruple of delicacy; but in the present state of the theatre this is not sufficient, and we are therefore interested more in reading this piece than in seeing it represented. Such a tragedy excites admiration rather than sympathy; we listen to it as to a canto of an

epic poem; and the calm which pervades the whole reaches almost to Orestes himself. The scene in which Iphigenia and Orestes recognize each other is not the most animated, though it is perhaps the most poetical part of the piece. The family of Agamemnon is recalled to remembrance in so admirably skilful manner, that the pictures with which both history and fable have enriched antiquity, seem all to pass before our eyes. We are interested also by the finest language and most elevated sentiments. Poetry so sublime raises the soul to noble contemplation, which renders dramatic variety and action almost unecessary.

Amongst the great number of passages worthy of quotation in this piece there is one which seems perfectly new. Iphigenia, in her affliction, recollects a song formerly known in her family, and taught her by her nurse in her infancy: 'tis the song which the Parcæ address to Tantalus in the infernal regions. They recall to his recollection his former glory, when he was the guest of the gods at the golden table; they describe the terrible moment when he was hurled from his throne, the punishment inflicted on him by the gods, the tranquillity of those deities who preside

over the universe, a tranquillity not to be shaken even by the torments and lamentations of hell. These menacing Parcæ, inform the descendants of Tantalus that the gods will forsake them because their features recall the remembrance of their father. The aged Tantalus, plunged in eternal night, hears this sad song, thinks on his children, and bows down his guilty head. Images the most striking, and a rhythm peculiarly adapted to the sentiment, give to this poetry the air and energy of a national song. It is the greatest effort of talent thus to familiarize us with antiquity, and to seize at the same time what would have been popular among the Greeks, and what produces also at the distance of so many ages an impression equally solemn.

The admiration of Goëthe's Iphigenia in Tauris, which it is impossible for us not to feel, does not contradict what I have said on the more lively interest and warmer degree of feeling which we may experience from modern subjects—those manners and that religion the traces of which are almost effaced through the lapse of ages, present man to us almost as an ideal being who scarcely touches

the earth on which he moves; but in the epochs and events of history which still influence the present moment, we feel the warmth of our own existence and we expect affections similar to those by which we are agitated.

It appears to me then that Goëthe ought not to have placed in his piece of Torquato Tasso, the same simplicity of action and calm dignity of dialogue which was suitable to his Iphigenia. That calmness and simplicity appears cold and unnatural in a subject so modern in every respect as that of the personal character of Tasso and the intrigues of the court of Ferrara.

Goëthe wished to display in this piece the opposition which exists between poetry and relations of social life; between the character of a poet and that of a man of the world—he has shewn the injurious effect produced by the patronage of a prince on the delicate imagination of an author even when that prince thinks himself a lover of literature, or at least takes a pride in appearing to be so. This contrast between nature highly exalted and cultivated by poetry, and nature chilled but guided by the narrow views of policy, is

an idea which becomes the parent of a thousand others.

A literary character in the court of a prince, at first naturally thinks himself happy in being so situated; but in time it is impossible for him to avoid feeling some of the troubles which rendered the life of Tasso so miserable. Talents which are not perfectly free from restraint cease to be talents; and nevertheless it is very seldom that princes acknowledge the rights and privileges of the imagination, and know at once how to consider and guide it properly. It was scarcely possible to choose a happier subject than that of Tasso at Ferrara to display the different characters of a poet, a courtier, a princess, and a prince acting in a little circle with a degree of selfish harshness sufficient to set the world in motion. The morbid sensibility of Tasso is well known as well as the polished rudeness of his protector Alphonso, who professing the highest admiration of his writings, shut him up in a mad-house, as if that genius which springs from the soul were to be treated like the production of a mechanical talent, by valuing the work while we despise the workman.

Goëthe has described Leonora D'Este, the sister of the Duke of Ferrara, who was in secret beloved by the poet as enthusiastic in her desires, but weak from motives of prudence. He has introduced into his piece a courtier, wise in the opinion of the world, who treats Tasso with that superiority, which the man of business conceives he possesses over the poet, and who irritates him by the calmness and dexterity with which he wounds without precisely giving him any specific cause of offence. This cold-blooded being preserves his advantage, and provokes his enemy by stiff and ceremonious manners which continually offend without affording ground of complaint. This is the great evil arising from a certain sort of knowledge of the world; and in this sense eloquence and the art of speaking differ extremely, for to become eloquent it is necessary to free truth from all its restraints, and penetrate to the bottom of the soul, which is the seat of conviction; but dexterity of speech consists, on the contrary, in the talent of evading and parrying adroitly phrases which one does not choose to understand, making use of the same arms to indicate every thing offensive without its

being in the power of your opponent to prove that you have said any thing which ought to give offence.

This species of fencing inflicts much suffering on a mind embued with truth and sensibility; the man who makes use of it seems your superior, because he knows how to awaken your feelings while he himself remains undisturbed; but we should not suffer ourselves to be imposed on by this sort of negative strength. Calmness of mind is excellent when it is the result of that energy which makes us support our own troubles, but when it arises from indifference to those of others, this calmness is nothing more than a disdainful selfishness. A year's abode in a court or a capital is sufficient to teach us with ease how to mix address and grace with this sort of selfishness: but to be truly worthy of distinguished esteem, it is necessary, in one's own character, as in a fine literary composition, to unite opposite qualities—the knowledge of the world with a love of the sublime and beautiful, and that wisdom which results from our intercourse with mankind, with the flights of imagination inspired by a genius for the arts. It is true that such an

individual would contain in himself two distinct characters. Thus Goëthe in this very piece says that the two personages which he contrasts to each other, the courtier and the poet, are the two halves of one man; but sympathy cannot exist between these two halves, because there is no prudence in the character of Tasso and no sensibility in that of his opponent.

The painful susceptibility of literary men was obviously displayed in Rousseau and Tasso, and is still more commonly manifested in the works of German authors. French writers have been more rarely affected by it; by living in confinement and solitude, we find it difficult to support the external air. Society is in many respects painful to those who have not been early accustomed to it, and the sarcasms of the world are more fatal to men of talents than to all others; good sense alone would support them better. Goëthe might have chosen the life of Rousseau as an example of that struggle between society such as it is, and society such as a poetical imagination sees or wishes it to be; but the situation of Rousseau afforded much less scope for the flights of imagination than that of Tasso. Jean Jacques

dragged a great genius into very subaltern situations. Tasso, brave as the knights he sung, in love, beloved, persecuted, crowned with laurel, and still young, dying with grief on the very eve of his triumph, is a striking example of the splendour and the misfortunes attendant on distinguished talents. It appears to me that in this composition the warm colouring of the south is not sufficiently expressed, and perhaps it would be difficult to transfuse into the German language that sensation which is produced by the Italian—it is nevertheless above all in the characters that the traits of Germanic rather than of Italian nature, are discoverable. Leonora D'Este is a German princess,—the analysis of her own character and sentiments in which she is continually occupied, is not at all in the spirit of southern climates; there the imagination recoils not on itself, it advances without a retrospective glance, it traces not an event to its source, but it resists or yields to it without examining its cause.

Tasso is also a German poet. That impossibility of getting rid of the difficulties which arise from the usual circumstances of common life, which Goëthe attributes to Tasso, is a

trait of the contemplative and confined life peculiar to northern writers. The poets of the south have generally no such incapacity, they live more commonly in the open air, in public streets and squares, and above all *things*, *men* are more familiar to them. The language of Tasso in this composition of Goëthe's is often too metaphysical,—the madness of the author of "Jerusalem Delivered," did not arise from an abuse of philosophical reflections, nor from a deep examination of what passes in the bottom of the heart; it was occasioned, rather by a too lively impression of external objects, by the intoxication of pride and of love,—he scarcely made use of words but as harmonious sounds; the secret of his soul was neither in his discourse, nor in his writings: having never observed himself, how could he reveal himself to others? besides, he considered poetry as a very brilliant art, and not as a confidential disclosure of the sentiments of the heart. It is clear to me both by his Italian constitution, his Life, and his Letters, and even by the poems he composed during his imprisonment, that the impetuosity of his passions rather than the depth of his thoughts occasioned his

melancholy; there was not in his character, as in that of the German poets, that continual mixture of reflection and activity of analysis and enthusiam, by which existence is so singularly disturbed.

There is an incomparable elegance and dignity in the poetic style of the "Tasso" by which Goëthe shews himself the Racine of Germany. But if Racine is reproached for the little interest inspired by Berenice, we may with much more reason blame the dramatic coldness of Goëthe's Tasso; the design of the author was to penetrate into characters, merely by sketching their situations; but is this possible? from what sort of nature do we extract those long conversations, full of wit and imagination, which are held by all the different personages in turn? who is there that would thus exhaust all that can possibly be said without thinking it necessary to act? Whenever the smallest action is perceivable in this piece, we feel ourselves relieved by it from the continual attention we have been paying to ideas only. The scene of the duel between the poet and the courtier is extremely interesting; the rage of the one and the dexterity of the other, develope their

situation in a very striking manner, it is exacting too much either from readers or spectators to expect them to renounce all interest in the circumstances of the performance merely to attach themselves to the imagery and thoughts which it contains. In that case it would be needless to pronounce proper names, to suppose scenes, acts, a beginning or an end, or any thing, in short, which renders action necessary. In the quietness of repose we love contemplation, but when we are in motion whatever is dilatory is fatiguing.

By a singular vicissitude in taste, the Germans first attacked our dramatic writers as transforming all their heroes into Frenchmen, they with reason appealed to historical truth, to animate their colours and vivify their poetry; then all at once they grew tired of their own success in this species of composition, and they composed abstract pieces, (if we may be allowed so to call them) in which the social relations of men to each other are indicated in a general manner, independent of time, place, or individuality. 'Tis thus, for instance, that in the "Natural Daughter," another piece of Goëthe's, the author calls

his personages, the duke, the king, the father, the daughter, &c., without any other designation; considering the epoch in which the action of the play passes, the names of the personages, and the country in which they live, as so many vulgar concerns, too low for the dignity of poetry.

Such a tragedy is indeed fit to be acted in the palace of Odin, where the dead are accustomed to continue the occupations which employed them during their lives; there the huntsman, a shadow of his former self, pursues with ardour the shadow of a stag, and phantoms of warriors combat on a groundwork of clouds. It appears that for a time Goëthe was quite disgusted with the interest taken in theatrical performances: that interest was sometimes found in bad compositions; he therefore thought it should be banished from the good. A superior writer ought not however to disdain what is universally pleasing—he ought not to abjure his resemblance to our common nature, if he wishes to be valued for that which distinguishes him. The point which was sought for by Archimedes, to enable him to lift up the world, is exactly that by which an extraordinary genius approaches

the common class of mankind;—this point of contact enables him to raise himself above others: he must set off from what he experiences in common with us all, to make us feel what he alone perceives. Besides, if it be true that the despotism of our rules of propriety mixes often something factitious with our finest French tragedies, we do not find more truth in the extravagant theories of a systematic mind: and if there be a want of nature in exaggeration, a certain sort of calmness is also an affectation. It is a self-assumed superiority over the emotions of the soul which may suit philosophy, but which will not at all accord with the dramatic art.

We may without fear address these criticisms to Goëthe, for almost all his works are composed on different systems. Sometimes he abandons himself wholly to passion, as in Werther and Count Egmont,—at other times his fugitive poetry sets all the chords of imagination in vibration—again, he gives us historical facts with the most scrupulous truth; as in "Goetz of Berlichingen"—at another time he has all the simplicity of ancient times, as in "Herman and Dorothea;" he now

plunges himself with Faustus into the stormy whirlwinds of life; then, all at once, in "Tasso," "The Natural Daughter," and even in "Iphigenia" he considers the dramatic art as a monument erected on a sepulchre. His works have then the fine forms, the splendour and dazzling whiteness of marble, but, like it, they are also cold and inanimate. We cannot criticise Goëthe as a good author in one species of writing, while he is bad in another. He rather resembles nature which produces every thing, and from every thing; and we may like his southern climate better than that of the north, without denying to him those talents which are suitable to all the various regions of the soul.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Faustus.

Among the pieces written for the performance of puppets, there is one entitled "Dr. Faustus, or Fatal Science," which has always had great success in Germany. Lessing took up this subject before Goëthe. This wonderful history is a tradition very generally known. Several English authors have written the life of this same Dr. Faustus, and some of them have even attributed to him the art of printing,—his profound knowledge did not preserve him from being weary of life, and in order to escape from it, he tried to enter into a compact with the devil, who concludes the whole by carrying him off. From these slender materials Goëthe has furnished the astonishing work, of which I will now try to give some idea.

Certainly, we must not expect to find in it either taste, or measure, or the art that selects and terminates; but if the imagination could figure to itself an intellectual chaos, such as

the material chaos has often been painted the "Faustus" of Goëthe should have been composed at that epoch. It cannot be exceeded in boldness of conception, and the recollection of this production is always attended with a sensation of giddiness. The Devil is the hero of the piece; the author has not conceived him like a hideous phantom, such as he is usually represented to children; he has made him, if we may so express ourselves, the evil Being *par excellence*, before whom all others, that of Gresset particularly are only novices, scarcely worthy to be the servants of Mephistopheles (this is the name of the dæmon who has made himself the friend of Faustus). Goëthe wished to display in this character, at once real and fanciful, the bitterest pleasantry that contempt can inspire, and at the same time an audacious gaiety that amuses. There is an infernal irony in the discourses of Mephistopheles, which extends itself to the whole creation, and criticizes the universe like a bad book of which the Devil has made himself the censor.

Mephistopheles makes sport with genius itself, as with the most ridiculous of all absurdities, when it leads men to take a serious interest in any thing, that exists in the

world, and above all when it gives them confidence in their own individual strength. It is singular that supreme wickedness and divine wisdom coincide in this respect; that they equally recognize the vanity and weakness of all earthly things: but the one proclaims this truth only to disgust men with what is good, the other only to elevate them above what is evil.

If the play of "Faustus" contained only a lively and philosophical pleasantry, an analogous spirit may be found in many of Voltaire's writings; but we perceive in this piece an imagination of a very different nature. It is not only that it displays to us the moral world, such as it is, annihilated, but that Hell itself is substituted in the room of it. There is a potency of sorcery, a poetry belonging to the principle of evil, a delirium of wickedness, a distraction of thought, which make us shudder, laugh, and cry, in a breath. It seems as if the government of the world were, for a moment, entrusted to the hands of the Dæmon. You tremble because he is pitiless, you laugh because he humbles the satisfaction of self-love, you weep, because human nature, thus contemplated

from the depths of hell, inspires a painful compassion.

Milton has drawn his Satan larger than man; Michael Angelo and Dante have given him the hideous figure of the brute combined with the human shape. The Mephistopheles of Goëthe is a civilized Devil. He handles with dexterity that ridicule, so trifling in appearance, which is nevertheless often found to consist with a profundity of malice; he treats all sensibility as silliness or affectation; his figure is ugly, low, and crooked; he is awkward without timidity, disdainful without pride; he affects something of tenderness with the women, because it is only in their company that he needs to deceive, in order to seduce; and what he understands by seduction, is to minister to the passions of others; for he cannot even imitate love. This is the only dissimulation that is impossible to him.

The character of Mephistopheles supposes an inexhaustible knowledge of social life, of nature, and of the marvellous. This play of "Faustus," is the night-mare of the imagination, but it is a night-mare that redoubles its strength. It discovers the diabolical revela-

tion of incredulity,—of that incredulity which attaches itself to every thing that can ever exist of good in this world; and perhaps this might be a dangerous revelation, if the circumstances produced by the perfidious intentions of Mephistopheles did not inspire a horror of his arrogant language, and make known the wickedness which it covers.

In the character of Faustus, all the weaknesses of humanity are concentered: desire of knowledge, and fatigue of labour; wish of success and satiety of pleasure. It presents a perfect model of the changeful and versatile being whose sentiments are yet more ephemeral than the short existence of which he complains. Faustus has more ambition than strength; and this inward agitation produces his revolt against nature, and makes him have recourse to all manner of sorceries, in order to escape from the hard but necessary conditions imposed upon mortality. He is discovered, in the first scene, surrounded by his books, and by an infinite number of mathematical instruments and chemical phials. His father had also devoted himself to science, and transmitted to him the same taste and habits. A solitary lamp enlightens this gloomy

retreat, and Faustus pursues without intermission his studies of nature, and particularly of magic, many secrets of which are already in his possession.

He invokes one of the creating Genii of the second order; the spirit appears, and counsels him not to elevate himself above the sphere of the human understanding.—"It is "for us," he says, "it is for us to plunge "into the tumult of exertion, into those "eternal billows of life, which are made to "swell and sink, are impelled and recalled, "by man's nativity and dissolution: we are "created to labour in the work which God "has ordained us, and of which time com-"pletes the web. But thou, who canst con-"ceive nothing beyond thine own being, "thou, who tremblest to sound thine own "destiny, and whom a breath of mine makes "shudder, leave me! Recall me no more!" When the Genius has disappeared, a deep despair seizes on Faustus, and he forms the design of poisoning himself.

"And I," he says, "the image of the "Deity, I, who believed myself on the point "of tasting eternal truth in all the splendour "of celestial light! I, who was no longer a

" son of the earth, who felt myself equal to
" the cherubim, who, creators in their turn,
" are susceptible of the enjoyments of God
" himself! Ah! how much do I need expiate
" my presumptuous anticipations! One word
" of thunder has dissipated them for ever.
" Divine spirit! I had power to attract, but
" none to retain thee. During the happy
" instant, while I beheld thee, I felt myself at
" once so great and so little! But thou hast
" driven me back, with violence, to the un-
" certain lot of humanity!

" Who now will instruct me? What ought
" I to avoid? Ought I to yield to the impulse
" which presses upon me? Our actions, as our
" sufferings, arrest the advance of thought.
" Low inclinations oppose themselves to the
" most magnificent conceptions of the soul.
" When we attain a certain degree of sublu-
" nary happiness, we treat as illusion and
" falsehood whatever is more valuable than
" this happiness; and the sublime sentiments
" with which we were gifted by the Creator,
" lose themselves in earthly interests. At
" first, imagination, with its daring wings,
" aspires to eternity; soon a little space is
" enough for the ruins of our broken hopes.

" Anxiety takes possession of our heart. She " engenders secret griefs within it, and robs " it of pleasure and repose. She presents her- " self to us in a thousand shapes; now under " the aspect of fortune, then as a wife or " children, in the likeness of the dagger, of " poison, of flames, or of the ocean, she pur- " sues and harasses us. Man trembles in the " contemplation of what never will happen, " and mourns incessantly for what he has " never lost.

" No, I did not compare myself to the " Deity; no, I feel my misery: it is the insect " that I resemble;—the insect, that agitates " the dust on which it exists, and is crushed " by the foot of the passenger.

" And what but dust, are all these books " by which I am surrounded? Am I not shut " up in the prison of science? These walls, " these windows which environ me, do they " suffer even the light of the sun to reach me " without altering its rays? What am I to do " with these numberless volumes, with these " endless nothings that crowd my brain? " Shall I find among them what I want? If I " cast my eye over these pages, what shall I " read in them? That men every where

" torment themselves about their fate; that
" from time to time a single happy man has
" existed, and that he has made all the other
" inhabitants of the earth despair." *(A death's head is on the table.)* " And thou, who seemest
" to address me with that horrible grin, was
" not the mind that once inhabited thy brain
" guilty of error like my own? Did it not
" search for light, and did it not sink under
" the weight of darkness? These instruments
" of every description, that my father col-
" lected, to assist him in his vain labours;
" these wheels, and cylinders, and levers will
" they reveal to me the secret of nature? no,
" she is involved in mystery, for all that she
" pretends to display herself to the light;
" and, what she chooses to conceal, not all
" the efforts of science will ever tear from
" her bosom.

" My eyes turn themselves, then, to thee,
" thou poisoned beverage! Thou, who be-
" stowest death, I salute thee like a pale ray
" of light in the gloomy forest. In thee, I
" honour science and reverence the human
" understanding. Thou art the sweetest es-
" sence of all sleeping juices. In thee are
" concentered all the powers of death. Come

" to my relief! I feel my troubled spirit al-
" ready grow calm; I am about to launch
" upon the open sea. The limpid waves glit-
" ter like a mirror under my feet. A new day
" invites me to the opposite shore. A chariot
" of fire already hovers over my head; I am
" about to ascend it; soon shall I wander
" among the ætherial spheres, and taste the
" delights of the heavenly regions.

" But how deserve them in this state of
" my debasement? Yes, I may deserve them
" if I dare, if I courageously burst those
" gates of death before which no man can
" pass without shuddering. It is time to dis-
" play the dignity of man. I must no longer
" shiver on the brink of this abyss, where
" the imagination condemns itself to its own
" torments, and the flames of hell seem to
" prohibit our approach. Into this cup of pure
" crystal will I pour the mortal poison.
" Alas! it once served for another use: it
" circulated from hand to hand in the joyous
" festivals of our fathers, and the guest, as it
" passed to him, celebrated its beauty in a
" song. Thou gilded cup! Thou bringest to
" my remembrance the jovial nights of my
" youth. No more shall I pass thee to my

" neighbour; no more shall I extol the artist
" that fashioned and embellished thee. Thou
" art now filled with a dismal beverage—it
" was prepared by me, it is chosen by me.
" Ah! be it for me, the solemn libation which
" I consecrate to the morning of a new ex-
" istence!"

At the moment when he is about to swallow the poison, Faustus hears the town bells ringing in honour of Easter day, and the choirs of the neighbouring church celebrating that holy feast.

THE CHOIR.

" Christ is risen. Let degenerate, weak,
" and trembling mortals be glad thereof!

FAUSTUS.

" With what imposing solemnity does this
" brazen sound shake my soul to its very
" foundations! What pure voices are those
" that make the poisoned cup fall out of my
" hand? Do ye announce, resounding bell,
" the first hour of the sacred sabbath of Eas-
" ter? Ye, oh choir! do ye already celebrate
" those strains of consolation, those strains,
" which, in the night of the grave, were sung
" by angels descending from heaven to com-
" mence the new covenant?"

The choir repeats, "Christ is risen," &c.

FAUSTUS.

"Celestial strains! potent and gentle, "wherefore do ye seek me, humbled in the "dust? Go! make yourselves heard by those "who are capable of deriving comfort from "you! I hear the message you convey to me, "but I want faith to believe it. Miracle is "the cherished offspring of faith. I cannot "spring upwards to the sphere from which "your glorious tidings descended: and yet, "accustomed from childhood to these songs, "they recal me to life. Once, a ray of di-"vine light used to fall on me during the "peaceful solemnity of the sabbath. The "drowsy hum of the bells used to fill my "soul with the presentiment of futurity, and "prayer was an ardent enjoyment to my "heart. Those same bells also announced "the games of youth, and the festival of "spring. The memory of them rekindles "those feelings of childhood which remove "us from the contemplation of death. Oh! "sound again, celestial strains! Earth has "regained possession of me."

This momentary enthusiasm does not continue: Faustus is an inconstant character, the

passions of the world recover their hold upon him. He seeks to satisfy them, he wishes to abandon himself to them; and the devil, under the name of Mephistopheles, comes and promises to put him in possession of all the pleasures of the earth, being at the same time able to render him disgusted with them all; for real wickedness so entirely dries up the soul, that it ends by inspiring a profound indifference for pleasures as well as for virtues.

Mephistopheles conducts Faustus to a witch, who keeps under her orders a number of animals, half monkeys and half cats. (*Meerkatzen.*) This scene may, in some respects, be considered as a parody of that of the witches in Macbeth. The witches in Macbeth sing mysterious words, of which the extraordinary sounds produce at once the effect of magic; Goëthe's witches also pronounce strange syllables, of which the rhymes are curiously multiplied; these syllables excite the imagination to gaiety, by the very singularity of their construction, and the dialogue of this scene, which would be merely burlesque in prose, receives a more elevated character from the charm of poetry.

In listening to the comical language of these cat-monkeys, we think we discover what would be the ideas of animals if they were able to express them, what a coarse and ridiculous image they would represent to themselves, of nature, and of mankind.

The French stage has scarcely any specimens of these pleasantries founded on the marvellous, on prodigies, witchcrafts, transformations, &c.: this is to make sport with nature, as in comedies we make sport with men. But, to derive pleasure from this sort of comedy, reason must be set aside, and the pleasures of the imagination must be considered as a licensed game, without any object. Yet is this game not the more easy on that account, for restrictions are often supports; and when, in the career of literature, men give scope to boundless invention, nothing but the excess, the very extravagance, of genius, can confer any merit on these productions; the union of wildness with mediocrity would be intolerable.

Mephistopheles conducts Faustus into the company of young persons of all classes, and subdues, by different means, the different minds with which he engages. He effects

his conquests over them, not by admiration, but by astonishment. He always captivates by something unexpected and contemptuous in his words and actions; for vulgar spirits, for the most part, take so much the more account of a superior intellect, as that intellect appears to be indifferent about them. A secret instinct tells them that he who despises them sees justly.

A Leipsic student, who has just left his mother's house, as simple as one can be at that age in the good country of Germany, comes to consult Faustus about his studies; Faustus begs Mephistopheles to take on himself the charge of answering him. He puts on a doctor's gown, and while waiting for the scholar, expresses, in a soliloquy, his contempt for Faustus. "This man," says he, "will never be more than half wicked, and "it is in vain that he flatters himself with the "hope of becoming completely so." It is so in fact; whenever people naturally well principled turn aside from the plain road, they find themselves shackled by a sort of awkwardness that proceeds from uncontrollable remorse, while men who are radically bad make a mock of those candidates for vice

who, with the best intention to do evil, are without talent to accomplish it.

At last the scholar presents himself, and nothing can be more *naïf* than the awkward and yet presumptuous eagerness of this young German, on his entrance for the first time in his life into a great city, disposed to all things, knowing nothing, afraid of every thing he sees, yet impatient to possess it, desirous of information, eagerly wishing for amusement, and advancing with an artless smile towards Mephistopheles, who receives him with a cold and contemptuous air; the contrast between the unaffected good humour of the one, and the disdainful insolence of the other, is admirably lively.

There is not a single branch of knowledge but the scholar desires to become acquainted with; and what he desires to learn, he says, is science and nature. Mephistopheles congratulates him on the precision with which he has marked out his plan of study. He amuses himself by describing the four faculties, law, medicine, philosophy, and theology, in such a manner, as to confound the poor scholar's head for ever. Mephistopheles makes a thousand different argu-

ments for him, all which the scholar approves one after the other, but the conclusion of which astonishes him, because he looks for serious discourse while the devil is only laughing at every subject. The scholar comes prepared for general admiration, and the result of all he hears is only universal contempt. Mephistopheles agrees with him that doubt proceeds from hell, and that the devils are *those who deny;* but he expresses doubt itself with a tone of decision, which, mixing arrogance of character with uncertainty of reasoning, leaves no consistence in any thing but evil inclinations. No belief, no opinion, remains fixed in the head after having listened to Mephistopheles; and we feel disposed to examine ourselves in order to know whether there is any truth in the world, or whether we think only to make a mock of those who fancy that they think.

"Must not every word have an idea an-
"nexed to it?" says the scholar. "Yes, if it
"can," replies Mephistopheles, "but we need
"not trouble ourselves too much about that,
"for where ideas are wanting, words come
"on purpose to supply the place of them."

Sometimes the scholar cannot comprehend

Mephistopheles, but he has only so much the more respect for his genius. Before he takes leave of him, he begs him to inscribe a few lines in his album, the book in which, according to the good natured customs of Germany, every one makes his friends furnish him with a mark of their remembrance. Mephistopheles writes the words that Satan spoke to Eve, to induce her to eat the fruit of the tree of life. "*Thou shalt be as God, knowing good* "*and evil.*" "I may well," says he to himself, "borrow this ancient sentence of my "cousin the serpent, they have long made "use of it in my family." The scholar takes back his book, and goes away perfectly satisfied.

Faustus grows tired, and Mephistopheles advises him to fall in love. He becomes actually so with a young girl of the lower class, extremely innocent and simple, who lives in poverty with her aged mother. Mephistopheles, for the purpose of introducing Faustus to her, takes it into his head to form an acquaintance with one of her neighbours, named Martha, whom the young Margaret sometimes goes to visit. This woman's husband is abroad, and she is distracted at receiving

no news of him; she would be greatly afflicted at his death, yet at least she would wish not to be left in doubt of it; and Mephistopheles greatly softens her grief, by promising her an obituary account of her husband, in regular form, for her to publish in the gazette according to custom.

Poor Margaret is delivered up to the power of evil, the infernal spirit lets loose all his malice upon her, and renders her culpable, without depriving her of that rectitude of heart which can find repose only in virtue. A dexterous villain takes care not wholly to pervert those honest people whom he designs to govern: for his ascendancy over them depends upon the alternate agitations of crime and remorse. Faustus, by the assistance of Mephistopheles, seduces this young girl, who is remarkably simple both in mind and soul. She is pious, though culpable; and when alone with Faustus, asks him whether he has any religion. "My child," says he, "you "know I love you. I would give my blood, "and my life for you; I would disturb the "faith of no one. Is not this all that you can "desire?

MARGARET.

" No, it is necessary to believe.

FAUSTUS.

" Is it necessary?

MARGARET.

" Ah! that I had any influence over you! " you do not sufficiently reverence the holy " sacraments.

FAUSTUS.

" I do reverence them.

MARGARET.

" But without ever drawing near them; it " is long since you have confessed yourself, " long since you have been at mass: do you " believe in God?

FAUSTUS.

" My dear friend, who dares to say, I be- " lieve in God? If you propose this question " to priests and sages, they will answer as if " they intended to mock him who questioned " them.

MARGARET.

" So, then, you believe nothing.

FAUSTUS.

" Do not construe my words so ill, charm- " ing creature! Who can name the Deity and

" say, I comprehend him? Who can feel,
" and not believe in him? Does not that
" which supports the universe embrace thee,
" me, and universal nature? Does not Heaven
" descend to form a canopy over our heads?
" Is not the earth immoveable under our feet?
" Do not the eternal stars, from their spheres
" on high, look down upon us with love?
" Are not thine eyes reflected in mine, melt-
" ing with tenderness? Does not an eternal
" mystery, visible and invisible, attract my
" heart to thine? Let thy soul be filled with
" this mystery, and when you experience the
" supreme happiness of feeling, call that hap-
" piness thy heart, love, God, it is all the
" same. Feeling is all in all, names are but
" an empty sound, a vain smoke, that darkens
" the splendour of heaven."

This morsel of inspired eloquence would not suit the character of Faustus, if at this moment he were not better, because he loves; and if the intention of the author had not doubtless been to shew the necessity of a firm and positive belief, since even those whom Nature has created good and kind, are not the less capable of the most fatal aberrations when this support is wanting to them.

Faustus grows tired of the love of Margaret, as of all the enjoyments of life; nothing is finer, in the original, than the verses in which he expresses at once the enthusiasm of science and the satiety of happiness.

FAUSTUS.

"Sublime spirit! Thou hast granted me all "that I have asked of thee. It is not in vain, "that thou hast turned towards me thy "countenance encircled with flames; thou "hast given me magical nature for my em-"pire; thou hast given me strength to feel "and enjoy it. Thou hast given me not "coldly to admire, but inwardly to be ac-"quainted with it; thou hast given me to "penetrate into the bosom of the universe as "into that of a friend; thou hast brought "before me the varied assembly of living "things, and hast taught me to know my "brethren in the inhabitants of the woods, "the air, and the waters. When the tempest "howls in the forest, when it uproots and "subverts the gigantic pines, and makes the "mountain re-echo to their fall, thou guidest "me into a safe asylum, and thou revealest "to me the secret wonders of my own heart. "When the calm moon silently ascends the

" sky, the silvered shades of ancient times
" glide before my eyes over the rocks and
" in the woods, and seem to soften for me the
" severe pleasure of meditation.

" But, alas! I feel it, man can attain per-
" fection in nothing; by the side of those
" delights which bring me near to the gods, I
" am doomed to support that cold, that indif-
" ferent, that haughty companion, who hum-
" bles me in my own eyes, and by a word
" reduces to nothing, all the gifts that thou
" hast bestowed upon me. He kindles in my
" bosom an untameable fire that urges me to
" the pursuit of beauty; I pass, in delirium,
" from desire to enjoyment; but in the very
" bosom of happiness a vague sensation of
" satiety causes me to regret the restlessness
" of desire."

The history of Margaret is oppressively painful to the heart. Her low condition, her confined intellect, all that renders her subject to misfortune, without giving her the power of resisting it, inspires us with the greater compassion for her. Goethe, in his novels and in his plays, has scarcely ever bestowed any superior excellence upon his female person-

ages, but he describes with wonderful exactness that character of weakness which renders protection so necessary to them. Margaret is about to receive Faustus in her house without her mother's knowledge, and gives this poor woman, by the advice of Mephistopheles, a sleeping draught which she is unable to support, and which causes her death. The guilty Margaret becomes pregnant, her shame is made public, all her neighbours point the finger at her. Disgrace seems to have greater hold upon persons of an elevated rank, and yet it is perhaps more formidable among the lower class. Every thing is so plain, so positive, so irreparable, among men who never upon any occasion make use of shades of expression. Goëthe admirably catches those manners, at once so near and so distant from us, he possesses in a supreme degree the art of being perfectly natural in a thousand different natures.

Valentine, a soldier, the brother of Margaret, returns from the wars to visit her, and when he learns her shame, the suffering which he feels, and for which he blushes, betrays itself in language at once harsh and pathetic. A

man severe in appearance, yet inwardly endowed with sensibility, causes an unexpected and poignant emotion.

Goëthe has painted with admirable truth the courage which a soldier is capable of exerting against moral pain, that new enemy which he perceives within himself, and which he cannot combat with his usual weapons. At last, the necessity of revenge takes possession of him, and brings into action all the feelings by which he was inwardly devoured. He meets Mephistopheles and Faustus at the moment when they are going to give a serenade under his sister's window. Valentine provokes Faustus, fights with him, and receives a mortal wound. His adversaries fly to avoid the fury of the populace.

Margaret arrives, and asks who lies bleeding upon the earth. The people answer *the son of thy mother.* And her brother dying addresses to her reproaches more terrible, and more harrowing, than more polished language could ever make use of. The dignity of tragedy could never permit us to dig so deeply into the human heart for the characters of nature.

Mephistopheles obliges Faustus to leave

the town, and the despair excited in him by the fate of Margaret, creates a new interest in his favour.

"Alas!" he exclaims, "she might so "easily have been made happy! a simple "cabin in an alpine valley, a few domestic "employments, would have been enough to "satisfy her limited wishes, and fill up her "gentle existence; but I, the enemy of God, "could not rest till I had broken her heart, "and triumphed in the ruin of her humble "destiny. Through me, will peace be for "ever ravished from her. She must become "the victim of hell. Well! Dæmon, cut "short my anguish, let what must come, "come quickly! Be the fate of this unhappy "creature fulfilled, and cast me headlong, "together with her, into the abyss."

The bitterness and sang-froid of the answer of Mephistopheles are truly diabolical.

"How you enflame yourself," he says to him, "how you boil! I know not how to "console thee, and upon my honour I would "now give myself to the Devil if I were not "the Devil myself; but thinkest thou, then, "madman, that because thy weak brain can "find no issue, there is none in reality? Long

" live he who knows how to support all things
" with courage! I have rendered thee not
" much unlike myself, and reflect, I beseech
" thee, that there is nothing in the world
" more disgusting, than a devil who de-
" spairs!"

Margaret goes alone to the church, the only asylum that remains to her; an immense crowd fills the aisles, and the burial service is being performed in this solemn place. Margaret is covered with a veil; she prays fervently; and when she begins to flatter herself with hopes of divine mercy, the evil spirit speaks to her in a low voice, saying,

" Dost thou remember, Margaret, the
" time when thou camest hither to prostrate
" thyself before the altar? Then wert thou
" full of innocence, and while thy timid voice
" lisped the psalms, God reigned in thy heart.
" Margaret, what hast thou since done?
" What crimes hast thou committed? Dost
" thou come to pray for the soul of thy
" mother, whose death hangs heavily on thy
" head! Dost thou see what blood is that
" which defiles thy threshold? It is thy bro-
" ther's blood. And dost thou not feel stir-
" ring in thy womb an unfortunate creature

" that already forewarns thee of new suf-
" ferings.

MARGARET.

" Woe! woe! How can I escape from the
" thoughts that spring up in my soul and rise
" in rebellion against me?

THE CHOIR, *(chanting in the church.)*

Dies iræ, dies illa,
*Solvet sæclum in favillâ.**

THE EVIL SPIRIT.

" The anger of Heaven threatens thee,
" Margaret! The trumpets of the resurrec-
" tion are sounded; the tombs are shaken,
" and thy heart is about to awake to eternal
" flames.

MARGARET.

" Ah, that I could fly hence! the sounds
" of that organ prevent me from breathing,
" and the chants of the priests penetrate my
" soul with an emotion that rends it.

THE CHOIR.

Judex ergo cum sedebit,†
Quidquid latet apparebit;
Nil inultum remanebit.

* The day of wrath will come, and the universe will be reduced to ashes.

† When the supreme judge appears, he will discover all that is hidden, and nothing shall remain unpunished.

MARGARET.

" It seems as if the walls were closing " together to stifle me; the vaulted roof of " the church oppresses me. Air! air!

THE EVIL SPIRIT.

" Hide thyself! Guilt and shame pursue " thee. Thou callest for air and for light; " miserable wretch! what hast thou to hope " from them?

THE CHOIR.

Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?
Quem patronum rogaturus?
*Cum vix justus sit securus?**

THE EVIL SPIRIT.

" The saints turn away their faces from " thy presence; they would blush to stretch " forth their pure hands towards thee."

THE CHOIR.

Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?

Margaret, at this discourse, utters a shriek and faints away.

What a scene! This unfortunate creature who, in the asylum of consolation finds despair; this assembled multitude praying to God

* Miserable wretch! what then shall I say? to what protector shall I address myself, when even the just can scarcely believe themselves saved.

with confidence, while the unhappy woman, in the very temple of the Lord, meets the spirit of hell. The severe expressions of the sacred hymn are interpreted by the inflexible malice of the evil genius. What distraction in the heart! what ills accumulated on one poor feeble head! And what a talent his, who knew how to represent to the imagination those moments in which life is lighted up within us like a funeral fire, and throws over our fleeting days the terrible reflection of an eternity of torments;

Mephistopheles conceives the idea of transporting Faustus to the Sabbath of Witches in order to dissipate his melancholy, and this leads us to a scene of which it is impossible to give the idea, though it contains many thoughts, which we shall endeavour to recollect: this festival of the Sabbath represents truly the saturnalia of genius. The progress of the piece is suspended by its introduction, and the stronger the situation, the greater we find the difficulty of submitting even to the inventions of genius when they so effectually disturb the interest. Amidst the whirlwind of all that can be thought or said, when images and ideas rush headlong, confound themselves, and seem

to fall back into the abysses from which reason has called them, there comes a scene which reunites us to the circumstances of the performance in a terrible manner. The conjurations of magic cause several different pictures to appear, and all at once Faustus approaches Mephistopheles and says to him; "Dost thou not see, there below, a young "girl, pale, though beautiful, who stands "alone in the distance? She advances slowly, "her feet seem to be knit together; do you "not perceive her resemblance to Margaret?"

MEPHISTOPHELES.

"It is an effect of magic, only illusion. It "is not good to dwell upon the sight. Those "fixed eyes freeze the blood of men. It was "thus that Medusa's head, of old, turned all "who gazed upon it to stone.

FAUSTUS.

"It is true that the eyes of that image are "open, like those of a corpse which have not "been closed by a friendly hand. There is "the bosom on which I rested my head: "there are the charms which my heart called "its own.

MEPHISTOPHELES.

"Madman! all this is but witchcraft;

" every one thinks he beholds the beloved of
" his soul in this phantom.

FAUSTUS.

" What madness! what torment! I cannot
" fly from that look; but what means that
" red collar that encircles her beautiful neck,
" no broader than the edge of a knife?

MEPHISTOPHELES.

" 'Tis true: but what would you do? do
" not lose thyself thus in thought; ascend
" this mountain; they are preparing a feast
" for you on the summit. Come!"

Faustus learns that Margaret has murdered the child, to which she had given birth, hoping thus to avoid shame. Her crime has been discovered; she has been thrown into prison, and is doomed to perish the next morning on the scaffold. Faustus curses Mephistopheles in the bitterness of rage; Mephistopheles reproaches Faustus in cold blood, and proves to him that it is himself who has desired evil, and that he has assisted him only because called upon by himself to do so. Sentence of death is pronounced against Faustus for having slain Margaret's brother. He nevertheless enters the city in secret, obtains from Mephistopheles the means of delivering Margaret,

and penetrates at night into her dungeon, of which he has stolen the keys.

He hears from afar off the imperfect notes of a song which sufficiently proves the derangement of her mind; the words of this song are very coarse, and Margaret was naturally pure and delicate. Mad women are generally painted as if madness accommodated itself to the rules of propriety, and only gave the right of breaking off sentences abruptly, and interrupting at convenient times the chain of ideas; but it is not so: real disorder of the mind almost always displays itself in shapes foreign even to the cause of the disorder, and the gaiety of its unhappy victims is more harrowing to the soul than even their misery.

Faustus enters the prison: Margaret believes that they are come to lead her to death.

MARGARET, (*rising from her bed of straw exclaims*),

"They come! they come! Oh! how bitter "is death!

FAUSTUS, *in a low voice.*

"Softly, softly, I come to deliver thee. "(*He draws near her to break her fetters.*)

MARGARET.

" If thou art human, my despair will touch
" thee.

FAUSTUS.

" Softer, softer! Thou wilt awake the
" guard by thy cries.

MARGARET, (*throwing herself on her knees.*)

" Who hath given thee, barbarian, this
" power over me? it is only midnight: why
" dost thou come to look for me so soon?
" have pity on my tears, let me live a little
" longer: to-morrow morning, is it not time
" enough? (*She rises again.*) — And then,
" I am so young—so young! and must I
" then die already? I was once handsome
" too: that was my ruin. Then my friend
" was near to me; but now he is a great way
" off. The flowers of my garland are scat-
" tered. Do not grasp my hand with such
" violence! be tender with me; let me not
" weep in vain! never, to this day, have I
" seen thee before.

FAUSTUS.

" How can I support her agony?

MARGARET.

" I am altogether in thy power. Only let

" me suckle my child; I have pressed it to my
" heart all night long. They have taken it
" from me to distress me. Don't they say
" that I killed it? Never shall I be again
" what I once was. Did they not sing songs
" against me, those wicked people? what
" would they say then?

FAUSTUS, (*casting himself at her feet.*)

" Thy lover is at thy feet, he comes to
" throw open the gates of this horrible prison.

MARGARET.

" Yes, let us fall on our knees; let us call
" the saints to our assistance. The cries of
" hell are heard, and the evil genii wait for
" us on the threshold of my dungeon.

FAUSTUS.

" Margaret! Margaret!

MARGARET, (*listening eagerly.*)

" It was the voice of my love. (*She springs
" towards Faustus, and her irons fall off.*)
" Where is he? I heard him call me. I am
" free, Nobody can keep me any longer in
" prison. I will support myself on his arm,
" I will rest on his bosom. He calls Margaret;
" he is there, before the door. Amidst the
" howlings of pitiless death I hear the soft
" and touching harmony of his voice.

FAUSTUS.

" Yes, Margaret, it is I.

MARGARET.

" It is thou: repeat that once again. (*She*
" *presses him to her bosom.*) 'Tis he! 'tis he!
" What is become of the anguish of my chains
" and of the scaffold? It is thou! I am saved!
" I see before me the road in which I first
" beheld thee, the smiling garden where
" Martha and I used to wait for you.

FAUSTUS.

" Come, come.

MARGARET.

" It is so sweet to me to stay with thee!
" Ah! do not leave me!

FAUSTUS.

" Haste! we may pay dearly for the least
" delay.

MARGARET.

" What! thou answerest not to my em-
" braces? My love, it is so short a time since
" we parted? Hast thou already forgotten to
" press me to thy heart? There was a time
" when thy words and looks called down all
" Heaven upon me! Embrace me! for mercy's
" sake, embrace me! Thy heart then is cold

" and dumb. What is become of thy love?
" who has robbed me of it?

FAUSTUS.

" Come, follow me, my dearest love: take
" courage: I love thee with rapture; but
" follow me, it is my only prayer.

MARGARET.

" But art thou indeed Faustus? Art thou
" thyself?

FAUSTUS.

" Yes, certainly; yes, come along!

MARGARET.

" Thou deliverest me from my chains,
" thou takest me again to thine arms. How
" is it that thou art not afraid of Margaret?
" Dost thou know well, my love, dost thou
" well know whom thou deliverest?

FAUSTUS.

" Come, come; the night already begins to
" fade away.

MARGARET.

" My mother! it was I who killed her.
" My child; it was I who drowned it. Was
" it not thine as well as mine? Is it true then
" that I behold thee, Faustus? Is it not a
" dream? Give me thy hand, thy beloved
" hand! Oh Heaven! it is moist: Wipe it.

" I think there is blood upon it. Hide thy " sword from me! Where is my brother? I " beseech you, hide it from me?

FAUSTUS.

" Oh! bury the irreparable past in oblivion! " you make me die.

MARGARET.

" No, thou must remain behind. I will de- " scribe to thee what manner of tombs thou " must prepare to-morrow. The best place " must be given to my mother; my brother " must be laid next to her. As for me, you " must place me farther off; yet not too far " neither; and my child, right upon my " bosom: but nobody must lie by my side. " I could have wished that thou mightest be " near me; but that was a sweet and pure " happiness, and belongs to me no more. I " feel myself dragged towards thee, and it " seems to me that thou violently drivest me " back: yet are thy looks full of tenderness " and goodness.

FAUSTUS.

" Ah! if you know me, come!

MARGARET.

" Where shall I go then?

FAUSTUS.

" Thou shalt be free.

MARGARET.

" The tomb is without those gates. Death " watches my footsteps. Come; but lead me " to my everlasting dwelling-place: I can go " no where but there. Wilt thou leave me? " Oh! my love, if I could——

FAUSTUS.

" Thou canst, if thou wilt; the gates are " open.

MARGARET.

" I dare not go out; no hope remains for " me. For what purpose should I fly? My " persecutors are waiting for me. To beg is " so miserable! And, above all, with a bad " conscience! It is dismal also to wander " about in a foreign land: and, besides, " wherever I go, they will lay hold on me.

FAUSTUS.

" I will remain near thee.

MARGARET.

" Quick, quick, save thy poor child! Go, " follow the road by the side of the rivulet, " cross the path that leads to the wood; on " the left hand, near the sluice, in the fish- " pond, catch it instantly: it will stretch out

" its hands to heaven; it is seized with con-
" vulsions.—Save it! save it!

FAUSTUS.

" Recover thy senses; one step more, and
" thou hast nothing to fear.

MARGARET.

" Had we but passed the mountain!——.
" The air is so cold by the side of the spring.
" There is my mother, sitting on a rock, and
" her aged head is shaking. She does not
" call me; she makes no sign to me to ap-
" proach: only her eyes are heavy; oh! she
" will never wake more! We used to be so
" glad when she slept.—Ah! what a recol-
" lection!

FAUSTUS.

" Since thou wilt not listen to my entreaties,
" I must drag thee along in spite of thyself.

MARGARET.

" Leave me! No, I will not endure violence;
" seize me not thus with that murderous
" strength. Ah! I have only too much done
" as you would have me!

FAUSTUS.

" The day breaks, my dear love! my
" dearest love!

MARGARET.

" Yes, it will soon be day; my last day
" dawns upon this dungeon; it comes to cele-
" brate my eternal spousals: tell nobody that
" you have seen Margaret to-night. Alas!
" my poor garland! It is withered: we shall
" meet again, but not on holidays. The crowd
" is gathering together, oh what a confusion
" of sounds shall we hear? The streets, the
" market-place, will hardly be large enough
" for the multitude. The bell tolls, the
" signal is given. They are going to tie my
" hands, to bind my eyes; I shall ascend the
" bloody scaffold, and the axe's edge will fall
" on my neck——Ah! the world is already
" silent as the grave.

FAUSTUS.

" Heavens! why was I born?

MEPHISTOPHELES *(appearing at the door.)*

" Haste, or you are lost; your delays,
" your uncertainties, are fatal to you; my
" horses—

MARGARET.

" Who is it that rises out of the earth?
" It is he, it is he; send him away. What
" should he have to do in the holy place? He
" means to carry me off with him.

FAUSTUS.

" You must live!

MARGARET.

" Tribunal of God! I abandon myself to " thee.

MEPHISTOPHELES (*to Faustus.*)

" Come, come away! or I will leave thee " to die together with her.

MARGARET.

" Heavenly Father! I am thine; and ye " angels, save me! Holy legions, encompass " me about, defend me! Faustus, it is thy " fate that afflicts me——

MEPHISTOPHELES.

" She is judged. (*Voices from Heaven are heard to cry* " She is saved!")

Mephistopheles disappears with Faustus; the voice of Margaret is still heard from the bottom of the dungeon, recalling her love in vain, " *Faus-* " *tus! Faustus!*"

After these words the piece is broken off. The intention of the author doubtless is that Margaret should perish, and that God should pardon her; that the life of Faustus should be preserved, but that his soul should be lost.

The imagination must supply the charm which a most exquisite poetry adds to the

scenes I have attempted to translate; in the art of versification there is a peculiar merit acknowledged by all the world, and yet independent of the subject to which it is applied. In the play of Faustus, the rhythm changes with the situation, and the brilliant variety that results from the change is admirable. The German language presents a greater number of combinations than our's, and Goëthe seems to have employed them all to express by sounds as well as images, the singular elevation of irony and enthusiasm, of sadness and mirth, which impelled him to the composition of this work. It would indeed be too childish to suppose that such a man was not perfectly aware of all the defects of taste with which his piece was liable to be reproached; but it is curious to know the motives that determined him to leave those defects, or rather intentionally to insert them.

Goëthe has submitted himself to rules of no description whatever in this composition; it is neither tragedy nor romance. Its author abjured every sober method of thinking and writing; one might find in it some analogies with Aristophanes, if the traits of Shakspeare's pathos were not mingled with beauties

of a very different nature. Faustus astonishes, moves, and melts us; but it does not leave a tender impression on the soul. Though presumption and vice are cruelly punished, the hand of beneficence is not perceived in the administration of the punishment; it would rather be said that the evil principle directed the thunderbolt of vengeance against crimes of which it had itself occasioned the commission; and remorse, such as it is painted in this drama, seems to proceed from hell, in company with guilt.

The belief in evil spirits is to be met with in many pieces of German poetry; the nature of the north agrees very well with this description of terror; it is therefore much less ridiculous in Germany, than it would be in France, to make use of the Devil in works of fiction. To consider all these ideas only in a literary point of view, it is certain that our imagination figures to itself something that answers to the conception of an evil genius, whether in the human heart, or in the dispensations of nature: man sometimes does evil, as we may say, in a disinterested manner, without end, and even against his end, merely to satisfy a certain inward asperity that urges

him to do hurt to others. The deities of paganism were accompanied by a different sort of divinities of the race of the Titans, who represented the revolted forces of nature; and, in Christianity, the evil inclinations of the soul may be said to be personified under the figure of Devils.

It is impossible to read Faustus without being excited to reflexion in a thousand different manners: We quarrel with the author, we condemn him; we justify him; but he obliges us to think upon every thing, and, to borrow the language of a simple sage of former times, *upon something more than every thing*. (De omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis.) The criticisms to which such a production is obnoxious may easily be foreseen, or rather it is the very nature of the work that provokes censure still more than the manner in which it was treated; for such a composition ought to be judged like a dream; and if good taste were always watching at the ivory gate, to oblige our visions to take the regulated form, they would seldom strike the imagination.

Nevertheless, the drama of Faustus is certainly not composed upon a good model.

Whether it be considered as an offspring of the delirium of the mind, or of the satiety of reason, it is to be wished that such productions may not be multiplied; but when such a genius as that of Goëthe sets itself free from all restrictions, the crowd of thoughts is so great, that on every side they break through and trample down the barriers of art.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Luther, Attila, The Sons of the Valley, The Cross on the Baltic. The Twenty-fourth of February, by Werner.

SINCE Schiller is no more, and Goëthe has ceased to write for the stage, the first dramatic author of Germany is Werner: nobody has known better than he how to throw over tragedy the charm and the dignity of lyric poetry; nevertheless, that which renders him so admirable as a poet, is prejudicial to his success in the representation. His pieces, which are of a rare beauty, if we look only at the songs, the odes, the religious and philosophical sentiments that abound in them, are extremely open to attack, when considered as dramas for action. It is not that Werner is deficient in theatrical talent, or even that he is not much better acquainted with its effects than the generality of German writers; but it seems as if he wished to propagate a mystical system of love and religion by the help

of the dramatic art, and that his tragedies are the means he makes use of, rather than the end he proposes to himself.

" Luther," though entirely composed with this secret intention, has met with the greatest success on the stage of Berlin. The reformation is an event of high importance for the world, and particularly for Germany, which was its cradle. The hardihood and reflective heroism of Luther's character make a lively impression, especially in a country where thought fills up by itself alone all the measure of existence: no subject, then, is capable of more strongly exciting the attention of Germans.

Whatever regards the effect of the new opinions on the minds of men, is extremely well painted in this play of Werner's. The scene opens in the mines of Saxony, not far from Wittemberg, the dwelling-place of Luther: the song of the miners captivates the imagination; the burthen of this song is always an address to the upper earth, the free air, and the sun. These uneducated men, already laid hold of by Luther's doctrine, discourse together about him and about the reformation; and, in the obscurity of their sub-

terraneous abodes, employ their minds about liberty of conscience, the enquiry after truth, this new day, in short, this new light, that is to penetrate the darkness of ignorance.

In the second act, the agents of the Elector of Saxony come to throw open to the nuns the doors of their convents. This scene, which might be rendered comic, is treated with an affecting solemnity. Werner intimately comprehends all the diversities of Christian worship; and if he rightly conceives the noble simplicity of Protestantism, he also knows the severe sanctity of vows made at the foot of the cross. The abbess of the convent, in casting off the veil which had covered the dark ringlets of her youth, and now conceals her whitened locks, experiences a sentiment of alarm at once pathetic and natural; and expresses her sorrow in verses harmonious and pure as the solitude of her religious retirement. Among these female recluses is she who is afterwards to be united to Luther, and she is at that moment the most adverse of all to his influence.

Among the beauties of this act, must be reckoned the portrait of Charles the Fifth, of that sovereign whose soul is weary of the

empire of the world. A Saxon gentleman attached to his service thus expresses himself concerning him: "This gigantic man," he says, "has no heart enclosed within his "frightful breast. The thunderbolt of the "Almighty is in his hand; but he knows not "how to join with it the apotheosis of love. "He is like the young eagle that grasps the "entire globe of earth in one of his talons, "and is about to devour it for his food." These few words are worthy to announce Charles the Fifth; but it is more easy to paint such a character, than to make it speak for itself.

Luther trusts to the word of Charles the Fifth, although a hundred years before, at the Council of Constance, John Huss and Jerome of Prague had been burnt alive, notwithstanding the safe conduct of the Emperor Sigismund. On the eve of repairing to Worms, where the Diet of the Empire is held, Luther's courage fails him for a few moments; he feels himself seized with terror and misgiving. His young disciple brings him the flute on which he was accustomed to play to restore his depressed spirits; he takes it, and its harmonious concords reproduce in

his heart all that confidence in God, which is the wonder of spiritual existence. It is said that this moment excited great sensation on the Berlin stage, and it is easy to conceive it. Words, however beautiful, cannot effect so sudden a change of our inward disposition as music; Luther considered it as an art appertaining to theology, and powerfully conducive to the development of religious sentiment, in the human heart.

The part of Charles the Fifth, in the diet of Worms, is not exempt from affectation, and is consequently wanting in grandeur. The author has attempted to put in opposition the pride of the Spaniards and the rude simplicity of the Germans; but, besides that, Charles the Fifth was endowed with too vast a genius to belong either to this or that nation exclusively, it seems to me that Werner should have taken care not to represent a man, of an arbitrary will, as openly, and above all uselessly, proclaiming that will. It loses itself as it were, by being expressed; and despotic sovereigns have always excited more fear by what they concealed than by what they displayed to sight.

Werner, with all the wildness of his imagi-

nation, possesses a very acute and a very observing mind; but it seems to me that, in the part of Charles the Fifth, he has made use of colours that are not varied like those of nature.

One of the fine situations of this play, is the procession to the Diet of the bishops, the cardinals, and all the pomp of the Catholic religion on one side; and of Luther, Melancthon, and some of their disciples of the reformed faith, clothed in black, and singing in their national tongue the canticle, beginning, *Our God is our place of strength,* on the other. External magnificence has often been boasted as a means of acting upon the imagination; but when Christianity displays itself in its pure and genuine simplicity, that poetry which speaks from the bottom of the soul bears the palm from all others.

The act in which Luther pleads in presence of Charles the Fifth, the princes of the empire, and the diet, opens with the discourse of Luther; but only its peroration is heard, because he is judged to have already said all that concerns his doctrine. After he has spoken, the opinions of the princes and deputies are collected respecting his suit. The

different interests by which men are agitated, fear, fanaticism, ambition, are all perfectly characterised in these opinions. One of the voters, among others, says much in favour of Luther and of his doctrine; but he adds, at the same time, "that, since all the world "affirms that the empire is troubled by it, he "is of opinion, though much against his in- "clination, that Luther ought to be burnt." One cannot help admiring, in the works of Werner, the perfect knowledge of mankind that he possesses, and it were to be wished that he would descend from his reveries a little oftener, and place his foot on the earth to develope in his dramatic writings that observing spirit.

Luther is dismissed by Charles the Fifth, and shut up for some time in the fortress of Wurtzburg, because his friends, with the Elector of Saxony at their head, believed him to be more secure there. He reappears at last in Wittenberg, where he has established his doctrine, as well as throughout the North of Germany.

Toward the conclusion of the fifth act, Luther preaches in the middle of the night in the church against ancient errors. He

announces their speedy disappearance, and the new day of reason that is about to dawn. At this instant, on the stage of Berlin, the tapers are seen to go out one after another, and the first break of morning appears through the windows of the Gothic cathedral.

The drama of Luther is so animated, so varied, that it is easy to conceive how it must have ravished all the spectators; nevertheless we are often distracted from the principal idea by singularities and allegories, which are ill suited to a historical subject, and particularly so to theatrical representation.

Catherine, on perceiving Luther, whom she detested, exclaims:—"he is my ideal!" and immediately the most violent love takes possession of her soul. Werner believes that there is predestination in love, and that beings who are made for each other, recognize at first sight. This is a very agreeable doctrine of metaphysics, and admirably well fitted for madrigals, but which would hardly be comprehended on the stage; besides nothing can be more strange than this exclamation of idealism as addressed to Martin Luther; for he is represented to us as a fat monk, learned and scholastic, very ill suited to have applied

to him the most romantic expression that can be borrowed from the modern theory of the fine arts.

Two angels, under the form of a young man, the disciple of Luther, and a young girl, the friend of Catherine, seem to pass through the whole performance with hyacinths and palms, as symbols of purity and of faith. These two angels disappear at the end, and the imagination follows them into the air; but the pathetic is less strongly felt when fanciful pictures are made use of to embellish the situation; it is a new sort of pleasure, no longer that to which the emotions of the soul give birth: for compassion cannot exist without sympathy. We wish to judge of characters on the stage as of really existing persons; to censure or approve their actions, to guess them, to comprehend them, to transport ourselves into their places, so as to experience all the interest of real life, without dreading its dangers.

The opinions of Werner, in respect to love and religion, ought not to be slightly examined. What he feels is assuredly true for him; but since, in these respects particularly, every individual has a different point of view

and different impressions, it is not right that an author should make an art which is essentially universal and popular, conduce to the propagation of his own personal opinion.

Another very fine and very original production of Werner's is his "Attila." The author takes up the history of this *scourge of God* at the moment of his appearance before the gates of Rome. The first act opens with the lamentations of women and children who have just escaped from the ashes of Aquileia; and this exposition into action not only excites interest from the first, but gives a terrible idea of the power of Attila. It is a necessary art for the stage, to make known the principal characters, rather by the effect they produce on those about them, than by a portrait, how striking soever. A single man, multiplied by those who obey him, fills Asia and Europe with consternation. What a gigantic image of despotic will does this spectacle afford us.

Next to the character of Attila is that of a princess of Burgundy, Hildegonde, who is about to be united to him, and by whom he imagines himself beloved. This princess harbours a deep feeling of vengeance against him for the deaths of her father and lover. She is re-

solved to marry, only that she may assassinate him; and, by a singular refinement of hatred she nurses him when wounded, that he may not die the honourable death of a soldier. This woman is painted like the goddess of war; her fair hair and her scarlet vest seem to unite in her person the images of weakness and fury. It is a mysterious character, which at first takes strong hold on the imagination; but, when this mystery goes on continually encreasing, when the poet gives us to suppose that an infernal power has obtained possession of her, and that not only, at the end of the piece, she immolates Attila on the wedding night, but stabs his son, of the age of fourteen years, by his side, this creature loses all the features of womanhood, and the aversion she inspires gains the ascendency over the terror she is otherwise calculated to excite. Nevertheless, this whole part of Hildegonde is an original invention; and, in an epic poem, which might admit of allegorical personages, this Fury in the disguise of gentleness, attached to the steps of a tyrant, like perfidious Flattery, might doubtless produce a grand effect.

At last, this terrible Attila appears, in the

midst of the flames that have consumed the city of Aquileia; he seats himself on the ruins of the palace he has just destroyed, and seems charged with the task of accomplishing alone, in a single day, the work of ages. He has a sort of superstition, as it were, that centres in his own person, is himself the object of his own worship, believes in himself, regards himself as the instrument of the decrees of heaven, and this conviction mingles a certain system of equity with his crimes. He reproaches his enemies with their faults as if he had not committed more than all of them; he is a ferocious, and yet a generous barbarian, he is despotic, and yet shows himself faithful to his word; to conclude, in the midst of all the riches of the world he lives a soldier, and asks nothing of earth but the enjoyment of subduing her.

Attila performs the functions of a judge in the public square, and there pronounces sentence on the crimes that are brought before his tribunal, with a natural instinct that penetrates deeper into the principles of action than abstract laws, which decide alike upon cases materially different. He condemns his friend who is guilty of perjury, embraces him in tears,

but orders that he shall be instantly torn to pieces by horses; he is guided by the notion of an inflexible necessity, and his own will appears to him to constitute that necessity. The emotions of his soul have a sort of rapidity and decision which excludes all shades of distinction; it seems as if that soul bore itself altogether, with the irresistible impulse of physical strength, in the direction it follows. At last they bring before his tribunal a man who has slain his brother: having himself been guilty of the same crime, he is strongly agitated, and refuses to be the judge of the culprit. Attila, with all his transgressions, believed himself charged with the accomplishment of the divine justice on earth, and, when called upon to condemn another for an outrage similar to that by which his own life has been soiled, something in the nature of remorse takes possession of him to the very bottom of his soul.

The second act is a truly admirable representation of the court of Valentinian at Rome. The author brings on the stage, with equal sagacity and justice, the frivolity of the young Emperor, who is not turned aside by the impending ruin of his empire from his accus-

tomed range of dissipations; the insolence of the Empress-mother, who knows not how to sacrifice the least portion of her animosities to the safety of the state, and who abandons herself to the most abject baseness, the moment any personal danger threatens her. The courtiers, indefatigable in intrigue, still seek each other's ruin on the eve of the ruin of all; and ancient Rome is punished by a barbarian for the tyranny she exercised over the rest of the world: this picture is worthy of a poetical historian like Tacitus.

In the midst of characters so true, appears pope Leo, a sublime personage furnished by history, and the princess Honoria, whose inheritance is claimed by Attila for the purpose of restoring it to her. Honoria secretly imbibes a passionate love for the proud conqueror whom she has never beheld, but whose glory has enflamed her imagination. We see that the author's intention has been to make Hildegonde and Honoria the good and evil genius of Attila; and from the moment we perceive the allegory which we fancy to be wrapped up in these personages, the dramatic interest which they are otherwise calculated to inspire grows cold. This interest, nevertheless, is

admirably revived in many scenes of the play, particularly when Attila, after having defeated the armies of the emperor Valentinian, marches to Rome, and meets on his road Pope Leo, borne in a litter, and preceded by all the pomp of the priesthood.

Leo calls upon him, in the name of God, to abstain from entering the eternal city. Attila immediately experiences a religious terror, till that moment a stranger to his soul. He fancies that he beholds St. Peter in heaven, standing with a drawn sword to prohibit his advance. This scene is the subject of an admirable picture of Raphael's. On one side, a calm dignity reigns in the figure of the defenceless old man, surrounded by other men, who all, like himself, repose with confidence in the protection of God; and on the other, consternation is painted on the formidable countenance of the king of the Huns; his very horse rears with affright at the blaze of celestial radiance, and the soldiers of the invincible cast down their eyes before the white hairs of the holy man, who passes without fear through the midst of them.

The words of the poet finely express the sublime design of the painter; the discourse

of Leo is an inspired hymn; and the manner in which the conversion of the warrior of the North is indicated seems to me also truly admirable. Attila, his eyes turned towards heaven, and contemplating the apparition which he thinks he beholds, calls Edecon, one of the chiefs of his army, and says to him,

" Edecon, dost thou not perceive there on " high a terrible giant? Dost thou not be- " hold him even above the place where the " old man is made conspicuous by the resul- " gence of Heaven?

EDECON.

" I see only the ravens descending in " troops over the dead bodies on which they " are going to feed.

ATTILA.

" No; it is not a phantom: perhaps it is " the image of him who is alone able to ab- " solve or condemn. Did not the old man " predict it? Behold the giant whose head is " in heaven, and whose feet touch the earth; " he menaces with his flames the spot upon " which we are standing; he is there, before " us, motionless; he points his flaming sword " against me, like my judge.

EDECON.

" These flames are the light of heaven,
" which at this moment gilds the domes of
" the Roman temples.

ATTILA.

" Yes, it is a temple of gold, studded with
" pearls, that he bears upon his whitened
" head; in one hand he holds his flaming
" sword, in the other two brazen keys, encir-
" cled with flowers and rays of light; two
" keys that the giant has doubtless received
" from the hands of Odin, to open or shut the
" gates of Valhalla."

From this moment, the Christian religion operates on the soul of Attila, in spite of the belief of his ancestors, and he commands his army to retreat to a distance from Rome.

The tragedy should have ended here, and it already contains a sufficient number of beauties to furnish out many regular pieces; but a fifth act is added, in which Leo, who, for a Pope, is much too deeply initiated in the mystic theory of love, conducts the princess Honoria to Attila's camp, on the very night in which Hildegonde marries and assassinates him.

The Pope, who has a foreknowledge of

this event, predicts, without preventing it, because it is necessary that the fate of Attila should be accomplished. Honoria and Pope Leo offer up prayers for him on the stage. The piece ends with a *Hallelujah*, and rising to heaven like a poetical incense, evaporates instead of being concluded.

Werner's versification is full of admirable secrets of harmony, but we cannot give in a translation any idea of its merit in this respect. I remember, among other things, in one of his tragedies, the subject of which is taken from Polish history, the wonderful effect of a chorus of young phantoms appearing in the air: the poet has found means to change the German into a soft and tender language, which these wearied and uninterested shades articulate with half formed tones; all the words they pronounce, all the rhymes of the verses, seem like vapour. The sense of the words, also, is admirably adapted to the situation; they paint a state of frigid repose, of dull indifference; they reverberate the distant echoes of life, and the pale reflection of faded impressions casts a veil of clouds over universal nature.

If Werner admits into his tragedies the

shades of the departed, we sometimes also find in them fantastic personages that seem not yet to have received any earthly existence "In the prologue to the "Tartare" of Beaumarchais, a Genius questions these imaginary beings whether they wish to have birth; and one among them answers, "I do not feel myself "at all eager about it." This lively answer may be applied to most of those allegorical personages which they take pleasure in bringing forward on the German theatre.

Werner has composed, on the subject of the Templars, a piece in two volumes, called "*The Sons of the Valley;*" a piece, which possesses great interest for those who are initiated into the doctrine of secret orders; for it is rather the spirit of these orders, than the historical colour that is principally remarkable in them. The poet seeks to connect the Free-masons with the Templars, and applies himself to the task of shewing that the same traditions and the same spirit have been always preserved among both. The imagination of Werner singularly delights itself in these associations, which have the air of something supernatural, because they multiply, in an extraordinary degree, the force of

each, by giving a like tendency to all. This play, or this poem, of the Sons of the Valley, has caused a great sensation in Germany; I doubt whether it would obtain an equal degree of success among ourselves.

Another composition of Werner's, well worthy of notice, is that which has for its subject the introduction of Christianity into Prussia and Livonia. This dramatic romance is entitled *The Cross on the Baltic.* There reigns throughout a very lively sentiment of all that characterizes the north, the amber-fishery, mountains rough with ice, the asperity of the climate, the rapid influence of spring, the hostility of nature, the rudeness which this warfare instils into man; and we recognise in these pictures a poet who has had recourse to sensations, he has himself experienced, for all that he describes and expresses.

I have seen acted, at a private theatre, a piece of Werner's composition, entitled *The Twenty-fourth of February:* a piece on which opinions would be greatly divided. The author supposes that, in the solitudes of Switzerland, there dwelt a family of peasants, which had rendered itself guilty of the most atrocious crimes, and was pursued by a paternal male-

diction from father to son. The third of these accursed generations presents the spectacle of a man who by an outrage has caused the death of his father: the son of this unhappy wretch has, in his childhood, killed his own sister in a cruel sport, but without knowing what he was about. After this frightful event he has disappeared. The labours of the parricidal father have been ever since visited by continual bad fortune; his fields have become barren, his cattle have perished; the most frightful poverty overwhelms him; his creditors threaten to seize his cottage, and throw him into prison; his wife wanders alone in the midst of the Alpine snows. All at once the son arrives, after an absence of twenty years. He is animated by tender and religious sentiments, and inspired with true repentance, though he had been guilty of no criminal intention. He returns to his father's house; and as he is too much altered to be recognized by him, forms the resolution of concealing from him his name at first, in order to gain his affection before he confesses himself to be his son; but the father, in his misery, becomes greedy and covetous of the money that is carried about him by his guest,

whom he believes to be a vagabond foreigner of suspicious character; and when the hour of midnight strikes, on the twenty-fourth of February, the anniversary of the paternal malediction by which the whole family is visited, he plunges a knife into his son's bosom. The latter, in his last moments, reveals his secret to this double criminal, the assassin of his father and of his child, and the miserable wretch goes to deliver himself up, to the tribunal that must condemn him.

These situations are appalling; it cannot be denied that they produce a great effect: nevertheless, the poetical colour of the piece, and the gradation of motives derived from the passions, are much more to be admired than the subject on which it is founded.

To transfer the fatal destiny of the house of Atreus to people of the lower ranks of society, is to bring the contemplation of crimes too familiarly before the eyes of the spectators. The splendour of rank, and the distance of ages, give to wickedness itself a species of grandeur which agrees better with the ideal in art; but when the knife is presented to you instead of the poniard, when the situation, the manners, the characters are such as you may

meet with every day, you are frightened, like children in a dark room, but it is not the noble horror that tragedy ought to awaken.

Still, however, this potency of the paternal curse, which seems to represent a providence upon earth, agitates the soul very forcibly. The fatality of the ancients is the sport of destiny; but fatality, in the Christian doctrine, is a moral truth under a terrifying form. When man does not yield to remorse, the very agitation which that remorse makes him experience, drives him headlong to the commission of new crimes; conscience, repulsed, changes itself into a phantom that disturbs the reason.

The wife of this guilty peasant is haunted by the remembrance of a ballad containing the recital of a parricide; and alone, in her sleep, she cannot help muttering it in an under voice, like those confused and involuntary fancies, of which the dismal recurrence seems an inward presentiment of fate.

The description of the Alps, and of their vast solitude, is extremely beautiful: the abode of the culprit, the hovel in which the scene passes, is far from any other habitation; no church bell is heard there, and the hour is announced only by a rustic clock, the

last piece of furniture that poverty has not yet resolved to part with: the monotonous noise of this clock, in the deep recesses of mountains where the sounds of human existence never reach, produces a strange shuddering. We ask, what has time to do in a place like this; to what purpose the division of hours that no interest varies? And when that dreadful hour of crime is heard to strike, it recalls to us the fine idea of the missionary who imagined that in hell the damned spirits are incessantly asking;—"What's o'clock?" and that they are answered,—"Eternity."—

Werner has been reproached for admitting into his tragedies situations that are better adapted for the beauties of lyrical poetry than for the development of theatrical passions. He may be accused of a contrary fault in the "Twenty-fourth of February." The subject of this piece, the manners it represents, bear too strong a resemblance to truth, and to truth of a description too atrocious to be admitted into the circle of the fine arts. The fine arts are placed between heaven and earth, and the genius of Werner sometimes rises above, sometimes sinks beneath, this native region of fiction.

CHAPTER XXV.

Various Pieces of the German and Danish Theatre.

THE dramatic works of Kotzebue have been translated into several languages. It would therefore be superfluous to employ ourselves in making them known. I shall only observe, that no impartial judge can deny him a perfect understanding of theatrical effects. *The Two Brothers, Misanthropy and Repentance, The Hussites, The Crusaders, Hugo Grotius, Jane de Montfaucon, The Death of Rolla* &c. excite the most lively interest wherever they are performed. It must still be confessed, that Kotzebue knows not how to give to his personages either the colour of the times in which they lived, or national features, or the character that history assigns them. These personages, to whatever age or country they belong, always appear to be contemporaries and fellow countrymen; they are invested with the same philosophical opinions, the same modern manners, and whether he is painting a man

of our own days, or a Virgin of the Sun, nothing is to be discovered in either but a picture of the present times, at once natural and pathetic. If the theatrical genius of Kotzebue, which is unique in Germany, could be joined to the talent of painting characters such as history transmits them to us, and if his style of poetry elevated itself to the height of those situations of which he is the ingenious inventor, the success of his pieces would be equally lasting and brilliant.

Besides, nothing is so rare as to find united in the same individual the two faculties which constitute a great dramatic author; dexterity in his trade, if we may so term it, and the genius that embraces the universe: this problem is the great difficulty of human nature itself; and it is always easy to distinguish among men, those in whom the talent of conception, and that of execution predominate; those who stand in relation with all times, and those who are exclusively the portion of their own: nevertheless, it is in the union of opposite qualities that phænomena of every description consist.

The greater number of Kotzebue's pieces are distinguished for some situations of strik-

ing beauty. In "The Hussites," when Procopius, the successor of Zisca, besieges Naumburg, the magistrates come to the resolution of sending all the children out of the town to the enemy's camp, to ask mercy for the inhabitants. These poor children must go alone, to implore the compassion of fanatic soldiers, who spare neither age nor sex. The burgomaster is the first to offer his four sons, the eldest of whom is only twelve years old, for this perilous expedition. The mother entreats that one at least may remain with her; the father appears to consent, and sets himself about summing up the faults of each of his children, in succession, that the mother may declare who are those for which she feels herself the least interested; but whenever he begins to throw blame upon either of them, the mother assures him that that is the one which she prefers to all the rest, and the unhappy woman is at last forced to agree that the cruel choice is impossible, and that it is better they should all partake the same lot.

In the second act, we are introduced into the camp of the Hussites; all the soldiers, of menacing figures, repose in their tents; a

slight noise awakens their attention; they perceive in the plain a crowd of children, marching in procession, with oaken boughs in their hands: they cannot conceive the signification of this, and taking their lances, place themselves at the entrance of the camp to defend the approach. The children advance fearlessly in front of the lances, and the Hussites involuntarily recoil, angry at finding themselves affected, and unable to comprehend what it is they experience. Procopius comes out of his tent; he causes the burgomaster, who had followed his children at a distance, to be brought before him, and orders him to point out which are his. The burgomaster refuses; Procopius's soldiers lay their hands on him, and immediately the four children rush into their father's arms. "You know them now," says the burgomaster to Procopius, "they have named themselves." The piece ends happily; and the third act is full of congratulations; but it is the second that affords the greatest theatrical interest.

Scenes fit for a novel constitute all the merit of the play of "The Crusaders." A young girl, believing her lover to have perished in the wars, has taken the veil at Jerusalem

in a religious order consecrated to the care of the sick. A knight, dangerously wounded, is brought to the convent. She enters, veiled, and, without lifting up her eyes to look upon him, kneels to dress his wound. The knight, in this moment of anguish, articulates the name of his mistress; and the unfortunate object of his love thus recognizes her lover. He forms the design of eloping with her: the abbess discovers the plan, and the consent of her nun to its accomplishment. She condemns her, in her rage, to be buried alive; and the unhappy knight, wandering in vain round the church hears the organ and the voices which are performing, underground, the burial service of one who is still alive, and who loves him. This situation is harrowing to the soul; but all ends, in like manner, happily. The Turks, led by the young knight, come to the deliverance of the victim. An Asiatic convent in the thirteenth century is treated in the same manner as the cloistered victims during the French Revolution; and a few sentiments, which are very gentle, but a little too easy, terminate the piece to the satisfaction of all the spectators.

Kotzebue has composed a drama from the

historical anecdote of the imprisonment of Grotius by the Prince of Orange, and his deliverance by his friends, who discover the means of conveying him out of the fortress where he is confined, hid in a chest of books. There are some situations in this piece worthy of notice; a young officer, in love with the daughter of Grotius, learns of her that she is trying to procure the escape of her father, and promises to assist her in this project; but the governor, his friend, being obliged to quit his charge for twenty-four hours, commits the keys of the citadel to his care. The governor is himself liable to the pain of death, if his prisoner escapes during his absence. The young lieutenant, in this manner made responsible for the life of his friend, prevents his mistress's father from saving himself, by forcing him back into his prison at the moment when he was ready to enter the boat prepared for his deliverance. The sacrifice made by this young lieutenant, in thus exposing himself to his mistress's indignation, is truly heroic; when the governor returns, and the officer no longer fills the place of his friend, he finds means of drawing on himself, by a noble falsehood, the capital punishment

denounced against those who shall have attempted, a second time, to rescue Grotius, and have at last succeeded in it. The joy of the young man, when his sentence of death ensures him the return of his mistress's esteem, is of the most affecting beauty; but, in the conclusion, there is so much magnanimity in Grotius, (who returns to deliver himself up again to save the young man's life,) in the prince of Orange, in the daughter, and in the author himself, that all we can do is to say *amen* to the whole. The situations of this piece have been transferred to a French play, but they are there ascribed to unknown characters, and neither Grotius, nor the prince of Orange, is named in it. This is wisely done, for there is nothing in the German original that agrees in a particular manner with the characters of these two personages, such as history has represented them to us.

"Jane of Montfaucon" being a chivalrous adventure of Kotzebue's own invention, he has used more freedom in that than in any other of his pieces, in the manner of treating his subject. A charming actress, Madame Unzelmann, used to play the principal part; and the manner in which she defended her

heart and her castle against a discourteous knight produced a very agreeable impression on the stage. By turns warlike and desponding, her helmet, and her dishevelled locks, alike seemed to embellish her; but situations of this description are better suited to pantomime than to dialogue, and the words answer no other purpose than that of filling up the action.

"The Death of Rolla" is of a merit superior to any that I have yet cited; the celebrated Sheridan has made a play from it entitled "Pizarro," which was attended with the greatest success in England; a single expression at the conclusion of the piece produces an admirable effect. Rolla, the chief of the Peruvians, has for a long time fought against the Spaniards; he loved Cora, a Virgin of the Sun, and has nevertheless generously laboured to vanquish the obstacles that separated her from Alonzo. A year after their marriage, the Spaniards carry off the infant son of Cora; Rolla exposes himself to every danger to recover him, and brings him back at last, covered with blood, in his cradle; Rolla observes the mother's terror at the sight. "Calm yourself," he says to her, "this blood is mine!" and he expires.

Some German writers have not, I think, done justice to the dramatic talent of Kotzebue; but it is fit to acknowledge the estimable motives of this prejudice; Kotzebue has not always paid sufficient respect, in his plays, to strict virtue, and positive religion; he has indulged himself in this error, not from adherence to system, as I conceive, but merely to produce, occasionally, a more powerful effect on the stage; it is not less true, however, that he deserves to be censured in this respect by rigid critics. He seems himself, for some years past, to have conformed to more regular principles, and so far from his genius losing by that conformity, it has in reality been considerably the gainer. Elevation and strength of sentiment always hold by some secret ties to the purity of morals.

Kotzebue and the greater part of the German writers had borrowed the opinion of Lessing, that prose is the language proper for the theatre, and that tragedy should be brought as nearly as possible to the style of common life; Goëthe and Schiller, by their latter works, and the writers of the new School, have overturned this system; these writers may rather be reproached with the contrary excess, that

is, a poetry too exalted, and which turns aside the imagination from theatrical effect. In those dramatic authors who, like Kotzebue, adopted the principles of Lessing, we almost always meet with simplicity and interest; "Agnes de Bernau," "Julius of Tarentum," "Don Diego," "and "Leonora," have been represented with great and deserved success; as these pieces have been translated in the collection of Friedel, it is useless to quote from them. It seems to me that "Don Diego" and "Leonora," particularly, might, with some alterations, succeed upon the French stage. It would be necessary to preserve the touching picture of that deep and melancholy passion which forebodes misfortune, even before any reverse had announced it; the Scots call these presentiments of the heart, a man's *second sight;* they are wrong in calling it the second, it is the first and perhaps the only true sight.

Among the prose tragedies that are elevated above the rank of melo-drame, some essays of Gerstenberg deserve to be noticed. It has entered into his imagination to choose the death of Count Ugolino for the subject of a tragedy; the unity of place is there of necessity, since

the piece begins and ends in the tower where Ugolino perishes with his three sons: as for the unity of time, more than twenty-four hours are needed to make a man die of hunger; but in the other respects the event is the same, and its progress is only marked by the increase of horror. There is nothing more sublime in Dante than the picture of this unhappy father, who has seen his three sons perish by his side, and who gluts himself in hell with feeding on the scull of the ferocious enemy who made him his victim; but this episode is not fit for the subject of a dramatic piece. A catastrophe is not enough to furnish out a tragedy; the piece of Gerstenberg contains energetic beauties, and the moment when we hear the prison walled up causes the most terrible impression that the mind is capable of experiencing, it is that of living death; but despair cannot sustain five acts; the spectator must either die or admit consolation; and we may apply to this tragedy what a lively American, Mr. G. Morris, said of the French in 1790, *they have passed the bounds of Liberty.* To pass the bounds of the pathetic, that is to say, to carry it beyond

that degree of emotion which the strength of the soul is capable of supporting, is the same as to destroy the effect.

Klinger, known by other writings, full of depth and sagacity, has composed a very interesting tragedy, called "The Twins." The rage experienced by him who passes for the younger of the two brothers, his rebellion against the right of primogeniture, the effect of an instant, is admirably painted in this piece; some writers have pretended that to this species of jealousy is to be ascribed the destiny of the Iron Mask; however that may be, it is easy to comprehend how the hatred which this right of primogeniture is capable of exciting may be more violent between twins. The two brothers go out together on horseback; they wait for their return, the day passes without their re-appearing; but in the evening the horse of the elder is discovered returning alone to the paternal mansion: a circumstance so simple as this can hardly be found in any of our tragedies, and yet it freezes the blood in our veins: the brother has slain his brother, and the father, in his indignation, revenges the death of one son on the only survivor.

This tragedy, full of warmth and eloquence, would produce a prodigious effect, I conceive, if made to relate to celebrated personages; but one finds a difficulty in conceiving passions so violent exerting themselves for the birthright of a castle on the banks of the Tyber. It cannot be too often repeated, that tragedy requires historical subjects or religious traditions which awaken great recollections in the minds of the spectators: for in fictions, as well as in real life, imagination falls back on the past, however eager she may be after the future.

The writers of the new school in Germany have, more than all others, of the bombast *(du grandiose)*, in the manner of conceiving the fine arts; and all their productions, whether successful upon the stage or not, are combined according to reflections and sentiments of which the analysis is interesting; but men do not analyze in the theatre, and it is in vain to demonstrate that such a piece ought to succeed; if the spectator remains cold, the dramatic battle is lost; success, with some few exceptions, is the test of genius in the arts; the public is almost always a very

sensible judge when its opinion is not influenced by passing circumstances.

The greater part of those German tragedies which are not destined even by their authors for representation, are nevertheless very beautiful poems. One of the most remarkable is "Geneviève of Brabant," of which Tieck is the author: the ancient legend that makes this saint live for ten years in a desert on herbs and fruits, without any other support for her child than the milk of a faithful doe, is admirably well treated in this romance in dialogue. The pious resignation of Geneviève is painted in the colours of sacred poetry, and the character of the man who accuses, after having attempted in vain to seduce her, is traced with a master's hand; this guilty person preserves amidst all his crimes a sort of poetical imagination which gives a gloomy originality to his actions as well as his remorse. The exposition of this piece is made by St. Boniface, who relates the subject of it, and begins in these terms: "I am "St. Boniface, who come hither to tell you," &c.: It is not by chance that the author adopted this form; he shews too much depth

and too much art in his other writings, and particularly in the very work which opens in this manner, not to shew us clearly that it was his intention to render himself simple, like a contemporary of Genev ve; but by dint of pretending to revive ancient times, we attain a certain affectation of simplicity, which only makes people laugh, whatever sober reason we may give them for being affected. Without doubt we should know how to transport ourselves into the age the manners of which it is our intention to paint; yet we must not altogether forget our own. The perspective of pictures, whatever be the object they represent, should always be taken according to the point of view in which they are to be contemplated.

Among the authors who have remained constant to the imitation of the ancients, Collin deserves the first rank. Vienna prides herself in this poet, one of the most highly esteemed in Germany, and perhaps for a long while past the only poet of Austria. His tragedy of "Regulus" would succeed in France if it were known there. In Collin's manner there is a mixture of elevation and sensibility, of Roman austerity and religious

mildness, that seems made expressly to reconcile the taste of the ancients with that of the moderns. That scene in his tragedy of "Polyxena," in which Calchas commands Neoptolemus to sacrifice the daughter of Priam on the tomb of Achilles, is one of the finest things that has ever been heard. The appeal of the infernal deities, demanding a victim to appease the ghosts of the slain, is expressed with a gloomy strength, a subterraneous terror, that seems to lay open to us the abysses underneath our feet. No doubt we are continually recalled to the admiration of ancient subjects, and up to the present time all the efforts of the moderns to draw out of their own funds sufficient to place them on an equality with the Greeks, have never succeeded; it is nevertheless desirable to reach that noble emulation; for not only does the principle of imitation exhaust itself, but the spirit of our age makes itself constantly felt in the manner of our treating the fables or the facts of antiquity. Collin himself, for instance, though he has conducted his play of Polyxena with great simplicity through the former acts, renders it complicated towards the conclusion by a diversity of incidents.

The French have incorporated the gallantry of the age of Louis XIV. with subjects taken from antiquity; the Italians often treat them with pompous affectation; the English, always natural, have imitated only the Romans on their stage, because they perceived in them some relation with themselves. The Germans introduce the philosophy of metaphysics, or a variety of romantic events, into their tragedies, founded on Grecian subjects. No writer of our days will ever attain to the composition of ancient poetry. It would be better, then, that our religion and our manners should create for us a modern poetry, whose beauty should consist in its own peculiar nature, like that of the ancients.

A Danish writer, Œhlenschläger, has himself transl ted his own plays into German. The analogy between the two languages admits the possibility of writing equally well in both, and Baggesen, also a Dane, had already given the example of a great genius for versification in a foreign idiom. A fine dramatic imagination discovers itself in the tragedies of Œhlenschläger. They are said to have met with great success on the stage of Copenhagen: in the closet they are calculated to

excite interest under two principal relations; first, because the author has sometimes found the means of reconciling the regularity of the French drama with the diversity of situations which the German taste requires; and secondly, because he has represented in a manner, at once true and poetical, the history and the fables of ancient Scandinavia.

We are little acquainted with the North, which touches upon the confines of the habitable world; the long nights of the northern countries, during which only the reflection of the snow seems to enlighten the earth; the darkness which bounds the horizon in the distance, even when the vault of heaven is illuminated by the stars, all seem to give the idea of unknown space, of a nocturnal universe by which our world is encircled. The air, so piercing as to congeal the breath, drives all warmth backwards on the soul, and nature herself, in these climates, appears made only to concentrate man within himself.

The heroes of northern poetical fiction have something gigantic in them. In their character, superstition is united to strength, while every where else it seems to partake of weakness. Images, drawn from the rigour of the

climate, characterise the poetry of the Scandinavians: they call vultures the wolves of the air: the boiling lakes formed by volcanoes preserve during winter the birds that seek refuge in the atmosphere by which these lakes are surrounded; in these regions of cloud every thing is impressed with a character of grandeur and gloom.

The Scandinavian nations possessed a sort of physical strength that seemed to exclude deliberation, and impelled the will, like a rock precipitating itself to the bottom of the mountain. The iron men of Germany cannot make us sufficiently comprehend these inhabitants of the extremity of the earth: they unite the irritability of passion to the persevering coldness of resolution; and nature herself has not disdained to paint them with a poet's pencil, when she placed in Iceland a volcano which vomits torrents of fire from a bosom of eternal snow.

Œhlenschläger has created for himself an entirely new career, in taking for the subjects of his plays the heroic traditions of his country; and, by following this example, the literature of the North may one day become equally celebrated with that of Germany.

It is here that I choose to terminate the review which I meant to give of those pieces of the German theatre which partake in any degree of the character of tragedy. I shall not sum up the defects and beauties which this tablet may present to us. There is so much diversity of genius and of system among the dramatic poets of Germany, that the same judgment cannot apply to all. Besides, the greatest praise that can be bestowed upon them is that very diversity: for, in the empire of literature, as in others, unanimity is almost always a sign of servitude.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Of Comedy.

"THE IDEAL" of tragic character consist, says W. Schlegel, *in the victory obtained by the will over destiny, or over our passions; that of comedy, on the contrary, expresses the empire of physical over moral existence: whence it follows that gluttony and poltroonery are, in all places, an inexhaustible subject of pleasantry.* The love of life appears to man the most ridiculous and the most vulgar of feelings, and the laughter which seizes upon mortal beings, when contemplating the object of one of their fellow mortals suffering under the apprehension of death, must be confessed to be a noble attribute of the human understanding.

But when we quit the circle, a little too common, of these universal pleasantries, when we arrive at the ridiculous extravagances of self love, we find that they partake of an infinite variety, according to the habits and tastes of each nation. Gaiety may flow either

from natural inspiration, or social relations; in the former case, it is suitable to men of all countries; in the latter, it differs with the difference of times, places, and customs; for the efforts of vanity being always directed towards making an impression on others, it is necessary to know what is attended with most success at such an epoch, and in such a place, in order to ascertain to what particular object those efforts should be applied: there are countries in which fashion renders ridiculous even fashion itself, which appears to have for its object to place every man out of the reach of ridicule, by giving to all a similar mode of existence.

In the German comedies, the great world is, in general, but badly described; there are few good models to be imitated in this respect: Society does not attract distinguished characters, and its greatest charm, which consists in the agreeable art of reciprocal pleasantry, would not succeed among them; it would soon dash in pieces the self love which is accustomed to enjoy itself in tranquillity, and it might easily also wither that virtue which would take offence even at an innocent pleasantry.

The Germans seldom bring forward on the stage, objects of ridicule taken from the manners of their own nation; they do not observe others, and are still less capable of examining themselves, under external relations; they would fancy that in so doing, they were in a manner wanting to the fidelity which they owe to themselves. Besides, susceptibility, which is one of the characteristic features of their nature, renders it very difficult to them to handle pleasantry with lightness; they frequently do not understand it, and, when they do understand it, it vexes them, and they dare not make use of it in their turn; it is like a gun, which they are afraid of seeing burst in their hands.

There are not, then, many specimens in Germany of that species of comedy which has the absurdities of society for its object. Natural originality would be better perceived among them; for every man lives after his own fashion in a country where the despotism of custom does not hold its sittings in a great capital; but, although there is a greater freedom of opinion in Germany than in England itself, English originality is invested with more lively colours, because the movement that

exists in the political state in England, gives better opportunity to every man to display himself as he is.

In the south of Germany, particularly at Vienna, a sufficient vein of gaiety is discoverable in the farces. The Tyrolese buffoon, Casperle, has a character peculiar to himself; and in all these pieces, of somewhat low comedy, both authors and actors make it their rule to have no pretension to elegance, and establish themselves in the natural, with an energy and decision, which amply compensates the want of artificial refinements. The Germans prefer strong to delicate humour; they seek truth in their tragedies, and caricature in their comedies. All the intricacies of the heart are known to them; but the refinement of social wit does not excite them to gaiety; the trouble that it costs them to comprehend, deprives them of the enjoyment of it.

I shall have occasion to speak elsewhere of Iffland, the first actor of Germany, and one of her most lively writers; he has composed several pieces, which are excellent in the delineation of character, and the representation of domestic manners; and these family pictures

are rendered the more striking, by the personages of a truly comic cast that are always introduced into them: nevertheless, we may sometimes find with these comedies the fault of being too reasonable; they are too carefully adapted to fulfil the purpose of the motto in front of the stage: *to correct by laughing* (*corriger les mœurs en riant*). They have too many young people in debt, too many fathers of families who have become embarrassed. Moral lessons are not the province of comedy, and there is even some danger in admitting them into it; for when they prove fatiguing, it is too possible that the impression produced at the theatre may become the habitual feeling of real life.

Kotzebue has borrowed from a Danish poet, Holberg, a comedy which has met with great success in Germany; it is entitled "Don "Ranudo Colibrados;" it is a ruined gentleman, who tries to pass himself off for a man of fortune, and employs, in making a shew, the little money he has, which is scarcely sufficient to keep himself and his family from starving. The subject of this piece serves as an appendage and contrast to Moliere's "*Bour-*"*geois Gentilhomme,*" who wishes to pass for

a gentleman; there are many lively, and some truly comic scenes in the "Poor Nobleman;" but it is a barbarous sort of comedy. The point of ridicule that Moliere has seized is intrinsically gay, but there is real misery at the foundation of that which the Danish poet has adopted; no doubt, it almost always requires great intrepidity of genius to treat human life as a jest, and comic force supposes a character at least of indifference; but it would be wrong to push this force so far as to brave the feeling of compassion; art itself would suffer by it, to say nothing of delicacy; for the slightest impression of grief is sufficient to tarnish all that is poetical in the full abandonment of the soul to gaiety.

The comedies of Kotzebue's own invention, in general, bear marks of the same talent as his tragic pieces, the knowledge of stage effect, and an imagination fruitful in the invention of striking situations. It has been for some time past pretended, that to laugh or cry proves nothing in favour either of comedy or tragedy; I am far from being of this opinion: the desire of lively emotions is the source of the greatest pleasures that can be derived from the fine arts; but we must not

conclude from thence that tragedy should be changed into melo-drame, or comedies into Bartholomew Fair farces, but real talent consists in composing in such a manner, as to produce, in the same play, or even in the same scene of a play, food for the tears or the laughter of the populace, and an inexhaustible subject for the reflections of the thinking part of the audience.

Parody, properly so called, can hardly be admitted on the German stage: their tragedies almost always affording a mixture of heroic and subaltern personages, give little room to this species of humour. The pompous majesty of the French theatre is alone capable of giving force to the contrast of a burlesque. We remark in Shakspeare, and sometimes in the German writers also, a bold and singular manner of displaying, even in tragedy, the ridiculous side of human nature; and when the power of pathos can be set in opposition to this impression, the effect of the whole becomes greater. The French is the only theatre in which the boundaries of comedy and tragedy are distinctly marked; every where else, genius, like the lot of nature,

employs gaiety as the means of sharpening grief.

I have seen at Weimar some of Terence's plays literally translated into German, and played with masks, nearly resembling those of the ancients; these masks do not cover the whole countenance, they only substitute more comic or more regular features to the real features of the actor, and give to his person an expression analogous to that of the character he is to perform. The physiognomy of a great actor is vastly superior to this; but the middling class of performers gains by it. The Germans seek to appropriate to themselves, the ancient and modern inventions of all countries; nevertheless, they possess nothing really national, in respect of comedy, but popular buffoonery, and pieces in which the marvellous furnishes matter for pleasantry.

An example of this may be cited in an opera which is performed on all the stages from one end of Germany to the other, called The Nymph of the Danube, or The Nymph of the Spree, just as the piece happens to be played at Vienna or at Berlin. A knight has

become the object of a fairy's passion, and is separated from her by circumstance; a long while after he marries, and chooses for his wife a very worthy woman, but who has nothing seductive, either of wit or imagination: the knight accommodates himself as well as he can to this situation, which appears to him so much the more natural, as it is common; for few persons understand that it is superiority of soul and of intellect that most nearly approaches to the original of our nature. The fairy is unable to lose the remembrance of her lover, and pursues him by the wonders of her art; every time that he begins to establish himself in his domestic economy, she draws his attention by prodigies, and thus awakens in him the recollection of their past affection.

If the knight approaches the banks of a river, he hears its waves murmuring the lays which the fairy was accustomed to sing to him; if he invites guests to his table, winged genii place themselves at the board, and spread a general consternation among the prosaic friends and relatives of his wife. Wherever he goes, flowers, dances, and concerts, spring up to harass, like phantoms, the

life of the faithless lover; and on the other side malignant spirits amuse themselves in tormenting his servant, who, in his way also, desires nothing so much as never more to hear speak of poetry: at last, the fairy is reconciled to the knight, on condition that he shall pass three days with her in every year; and his wife willingly consents to let her husband derive from the society of the fairy that enthusiasm which seems so well to ensure the enjoyment of what we love. The subject of this piece appears to be more ingenious than popular; but the marvellous scenes are mixed and varied in it with so much art, that it equally amuses all classes of spectators.

The new literary school, in Germany, has a system in comedy, as well as in every thing else; the delineation of manners does not suffice to excite its interest, it requires imagination in the conception of the subjects, and in the invention of the characters; the marvellous, allegory, history, no diversity of comic situations appears too much for it. The writers of this school have given the name of *the arbitrary comic* (*comique arbitraire*,) to that free range of all the ideas without restraint

and without determinate end. They rely, in this respect, on the example of Aristophanes, not assuredly because they approve the licentiousness of his pieces, but they are struck with the vein of gaiety which they exhibit, and they would willingly introduce among the moderns that daring comedy which makes sport of the universe, instead of confining itself to what is ridiculous in the different classes of society. The efforts of the new school tend, in general, to give more force and independence to the understanding in every province; and whatever successes they experience in this attempt, would be a victory for literature, and still more for the energy of the German character itself; but it is always difficult to influence, by general ideas, the spontaneous effusions of the imagination; and besides, a comedy calculated to lead the populace, like that of the Greeks, would never agree with the actual state of European society.

Aristophanes lived under a government so republican, that the people had a share in every part of it, and affairs of state were easily transferred from the forum to the theatre. He lived in a country where philo-

sophical speculations were almost as familiar to all men as the chefs-d'œuvre of art, because the schools were held in the open air, and the most abstract ideas were clothed in the brilliant colours which the sky and nature lent to them; but how create anew all this animation of life amidst the frosts of our atmosphere, and with our domestic habits of existence? Modern civilization has multiplied the means of observing the human heart: man is better acquainted with man; and the soul, as it were, disseminated, offers to the writer a thousand new shades of variety. Comedy takes advantage of these shades, and when able to give them the relief of dramatic situations, the spectator is delighted to recognize on the stage, characters such as he may easily meet with in the world; but the introduction of the people at large into comedy, of chorusses into tragedy, of allegorical personages, of sects of philosophy, in short, of all that presents men *en masse*, and in an abstract manner, would never please the spectators of our times. They require specific names and individual characters; they seek the interest of romance even in comedy, and society on the stage.

Among the writers of the new school, Tieck possesses, most of all, the true feeling of pleasantry; not that he has composed a single comedy that can be acted, or that those he has written are well arranged, but they display brilliant traces of very original humour. At first he seized, in a manner which reminds us of La Fontaine, the handle for pleasantry which animals are calculated to furnish. He has composed a comedy entitled "Puss in "Boots," which is admirable in this manner. I know not what effect would be produced on the stage by speaking animals; perhaps they are more amusing to be imagined than to be seen; but these animals personified, and acting like men, give, notwithstanding, an idea of the real comedy which nature inspires.

Tieck also interests us by the direction he has known how to give to his talent for ridicule; he bends its whole force against a calculating and plodding spirit; and as most of the pleasantries of society have for their object to cast ridicule upon enthusiasm, we love the author who ventures himself, foot to foot against prudence, selfishness, all those qualities that pretend to the appellation of reason, behind which the middling sort of people

think themselves securely placed to shoot their arrows against superior characters or abilities. They rely on what they call a just medium to censure every thing distinguished; and while elegance consists in the superfluous abundance of objects of external luxury, it seems as if this same elegance interdicted all luxury in the mind, all exultation in sentiments, in short, all that does not immediately tend to improve the prosperity of worldly affairs. Modern selfishness has found out the art of praising reserve and moderation in all things, so as to mask itself under the semblance of wisdom; and it was only at length perceived that such opinions might well annihilate genius, generosity, love, and religion: what would it leave that is worth the pain of living?

Two of Tieck's comedies, "Octavian," and "Prince Zerbin," are, both of them, very ingeniously combined. A son of the Emperor Octavian (an imaginary personage placed by a fairy tale under the reign of King Dagobert), while yet an infant in the cradle, is lost in a forest. A citizen of Paris finds him, brings him up with his own son, and makes himself pass for his father. At twenty years

old, the heroical inclinations of the young prince betray him under every circumstance, and nothing is more striking than the contrast between his character and that of his pretended brother, whose blood does not belie the education he has received. The efforts of the sage citizen, to cram the head of his adopted son with lessons of domestic economy, are altogether useless: he sends him to market to purchase some bullocks; the young man, on his return, sees a hawk in the hands of a huntsman; and, enchanted with its beauty, exchanges the bullocks for the hawk, and comes back quite proud of having obtained such a bird at such a price. Another time, he meets a horse, and is transported with its warlike air: he enquires the price of it, and, when he is informed, angry at their asking so little for so noble an animal, he pays twice the value for it.

The pretended father for a long time resists the young man's natural propensities, which animate him with ardour in the pursuit of danger and glory; but when he finds himself at last unable to prevent him from taking arms against the Saracens, who are besieging Paris, and when he hears his exploits made

the subject of universal praise, the old citizen, on his side, is seized by a sort of poetical contagion; and nothing is more pleasant than the whimsical mixture of what he was, and of what he wishes to become, of his vulgar language, and the gigantic images with which his discourse is filled. At last the young man is recognized for the Emperor's son, and each individual returns to the rank which is suitable to his character. This subject furnishes a number of scenes full of wit and true comic humour; and the contrast between common life and chivalrous sentiments was never better represented.

"Prince Zerbin" is a very lively painting of the astonishment of a whole court, at witnessing in its sovereign a propensity to enthusiasm, devotement, and all the noble imprudencies of a generous character. All the old courtiers suspect that he is mad, and advise him to travel, to set his ideas right as to things as they really are. They assign to him a very reasonable man for his governor, to bring him back to the positive knowledge of life. One fine day in summer, he is walking abroad with his pupil in a beautiful wood, while the birds are heard to sing, the wind

gently stirs the leaves, and animated nature seems, on all sides, to be addressing a prophetic language to man. The governor perceives in these vague and multiplied sensations, nothing but noise and confusion; and when he returns to the palace, he congratulates himself on seeing the trees converted into household furniture, all the productions of nature rendered subservient to utility, and artificial order instead of the tumultuous movement of natural existence. The courtiers are reassured when, on his return from his travels, Prince Zerbin, enlightened by experience, promises to concern himself no longer about the fine arts, poetry, and exalted sentiments, or any thing else, in short, but what tends to the triumph of selfishness over enthusiasm.

What the generality of men are most afraid of, is the being taken for dupes, and who think it much less ridiculous to appear wrapped up in themselves, under every circumstance, than deceived even in one. There is, therefore, wit, and a noble employment of wit, in turning incessantly into ridicule all personal calculation; enough of it will always remain to keep the world in motion, while,

one of these days, the very remembrance even of a nature truly elevated, may vanish altogether.

In Tieck's comedies is to be found a gaiety arising out of characters, and not consisting in witty epigram; a gaiety in which the imagination is inseparable from the pleasantry; but sometimes this very imagination sets comic humour at a distance, and brings back lyrical poetry into scenes where we expect to find only the ridiculous in motion. Nothing is so difficult to the Germans, as to abstain from abandoning themselves, in all their works, to reverie: and yet comedy, and the theatre in general, are hardly proper for it; for of all impressions, reverie is precisely that which is the most solitary; we can hardly communicate its inspirations to the most intimate friend: how is it possible, then, to associate with them an assembled multitude?

Among these allegorical pieces, must be reckoned "*The Triumph of Sentimentality*," a little comedy of Goëthe's, in which he has very ingeniously availed himself of the double absurdity of affected enthusiasm and real inanity. The principal personage in this

piece seems to be prepossessed with all the ideas which imply a strong imagination and a profound intellect; and yet he is in truth only a prince well educated, highly polished, and very obedient to the rules of propriety; he has taken it into his head to add to all this a sensibility at command, the affectation of which continually betrays him. He thinks he loves the gloom of forests, the moonlight, and starry nights; but, as he is afraid of cold and fatigue, he has scenes painted for him to represent these various objects, and never travels without being followed by a great waggon, in which all the beauties of nature are carried after him.

This sentimental prince also fancies himself in love with a woman, whose wit and genius have been highly extolled to him. This woman, to try him, puts in her place a veiled puppet, which, as we may suppose, says nothing in the least degree improper, and whose silence passes for the reserve of good taste, and the melancholy thoughtfulness of a tender soul.

The prince, enchanted with this companion, according to his wishes, asks the puppet in marriage; and only at last discovers that he

is unhappy enough to have chosen a mere doll for his wife, while his court afforded him such a number of women, who might have united in themselves all the principal advantages of such a partner.

It cannot, however, be denied, that ingenious ideas are not enough to furnish out a good comedy, and the French, in the quality of comic writers, have the advantage over all other nations. The knowledge of men, and the art of making use of that knowledge, secures to them the highest rank in this department; but we might perhaps sometimes wish, even in Moliere's best pieces, that reasoning satire held less place, and that imagination had more scope in them. The "*Festin de Pierre*" is, among all his comedies, that which has the nearest resemblance to the German system: a prodigy that makes one shudder, serves as the moving principle to the most comic situations; and the greatest effects of the imagination are mingled with the most lively shades of pleasantry. This subject, equally witty and poetical, is borrowed from the Spaniards. Bold conceptions are very rare in France; in literature, they like to work in safety: but whenever a for-

tunate circumstance has encouraged them to risk themselves, taste directs boldness with wonderful address; and a foreign invention, thrown into method by the art of a Frenchman, will always be a first rate production of genius.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Of Declamation.

THE art of declamation, leaving only recollections behind it, and being incapable of erecting any durable monument, it has followed that men have reflected but little upon what it is composed of. Nothing is so easy as the moderate exercise of this art, but it is not unjustly that in its perfection it excites so high a degree of enthusiasm, and, far from depreciating this impression as a transient emotion, I think that regular causes may be assigned to it. We seldom attain, in life, to penetrate the secret thoughts of men; affectation and falsehood, coldness and modesty, exaggerate, vary, restrain, or conceal whatever passes at the bottom of the heart. A great actor puts in evidence the signs of truth in sentiments and in characters, and discovers to us the certain marks of real inclinations and emotions. So many individuals pass through life without considering the danger

of their passions and their strength, that the theatre often reveals man to man, and inspires him with a holy dread of the tempests of the soul. In fact, what words are capable of painting them like an accent, a gesture, a look! Words tell us less than accent, accent less than physiognomy, and the inexpressible is precisely that with which a sublime actor brings us acquainted.

The same differences that exist between the tragic system of the Germans and that of the French, are also to be found in their mode of declaiming; the Germans imitate nature as closely as they are able, they have no affectation but that of simplicity; but even this may be an affectation in the fine arts. The German actors sometimes touch the heart deeply, and sometimes leave the spectator in a state of perfect frigidity; they then trust themselves to his patience, and are sure of not being deceived. The English have more of majesty than the Germans in their mode of reciting verses, but they nevertheless want the habitual pomp which the French nation, and above all French tragedy, acquire of their actors; our style will not admit of mediocrity, for it brings us back to the natural only by the

very beauty of art itself. The second rate actors, in Germany, are cold and quiet; they are often wanting in tragic effect, but are hardly ever ridiculous: it is the same on the German stage as in society; we meet with people who sometimes fatigue us, and that is all; while, on the French stage, we become impatient if our emotions are not excited: turgid and unnatural sounds then disgust us so entirely of tragedy, that there is no parody, how vulgar soever, which we do not prefer to the insipidity of mannerism.

The accessories of art, machinery and decorations, ought to be more attended to in Germany than in France, since these means are more frequently employed in the former nation. Iffland has been able to accomplish, at Berlin, all that can be desired in this respect: but at Vienna, they neglect even the necessary means for the good representation of the material parts of tragedy. Memory is infinitely more cultivated by the French than by the German actors. The prompter, at Vienna, used to furnish most of the actors with every word of their parts; and I have seen him following Othello from one side scene to another, to prompt him with the

verses which he had to pronounce at the bottom of the stage on poignarding Desdemona.

The theatre at Weimar is infinitely better ordered in all respects. The prince, himself an intelligent man and the man of genius, the connoisseur in the arts, who preside there, have found the means of uniting taste and elegance to that boldness which encourages new adventures.

On this stage, as on all others in Germany, the same actors play both comic and tragic parts. It is said that this diversity stands in the way of their ever becoming eminent in either. Yet the greatest of theatrical geniuses, Garrick and Talma, have united them both. The flexibility of organs, which transmits different impressions with equal facility, seems to me the seal of natural talent; and in fiction, as in reality, melancholy and gaiety are possibly derived from the same source. Besides, in Germany, the pathetic and the humorous, so often succeed and are mingled with each other in tragedies, that it is very desirable for the actors to possess the power of expressing both alike; and the best German actor, Iffland, has given the example of it with

deserved success. I have not met, in Germany, with any good actors in high comedy, marquisses, coxcombs, &c. What constitutes grace in this description of parts, is that which the Italians call the *disinvoltura*, and which the French would express by the *air dégagé*. The habit which the Germans possess, of giving importance to every thing, is precisely that which is most contrary to this easy lightness. But it is impossible to carry originality, the comic vein, and the art of painting characters, to a greater length than Iffland has done in his parts. I do not believe that we have ever seen on the French stage a genius more varied, or more unexpected than his, or an actor who ventures to render natural defects and absurdities with so striking an expression. There are certain given models in comedy, avaricious fathers, spendthrift sons, knavish servants, duped guardians; but Iffland's parts, such as he conceives them, can enter into none of these moulds: each of them must be designated by its name; for they are so many individuals remarkably different from each other, and in all of whom Iffland appears to exist as in himself.

His manner of playing tragedy is also, in

my opinion, of grand effect. The calm simplicity of his declamation in the fine part of Walstein, can never be effaced from the memory. The impression he produces is gradual; it seems at first that his apparent coldness will prove incapable of exciting any emotion; but, as the play goes on, that emotion grows upon us in a continually accelerated progression, and the smallest word exercises a great power when there reigns in the general tone a noble tranquillity that sets off every shade, and constantly preserves the same colour of character amidst all the variations of passion.

Iffland, who is as superior in the theory as in the practice of his art, has published several remarkably sensible works on declamation; he gives at first a sketch of the different epochs of the history of the German theatre, the stiff and heavy imitation of the French, the *larmoyante* sensibility of dramas, of a nature so prosaic, as to have made the writers even forget the art of versifying; finally, the return to poetry and imagination that constitutes the prevailing taste in Germany at the present time. There is not an accent, not a gesture, of which Iffland has not been able to

discover the cause as a philosopher and an artist.

One character in his pieces furnishes him with the most ingenious observations on comic performance; it is that of a man advanced in years, who all at once abandons his old sentiments and habits to clothe himself in the costume and opinions of the new generation. The character of this man has nothing wicked in it, and yet he is as much led astray by vanity, as if it had been intrinsically bad. He has suffered his daughter to contract a reasonable, though obscure alliance, and then, on a sudden, advises her to obtain a divorce. With some fashionable toy in his hand, smiling graciously, and balancing himself, now on one foot, then on the other, he proposes to his child to break the most sacred ties: but the existence of old age that discovers itself through a forced elegance, the real embarrassment straggling through his apparent indifference, these are traits which Iffland has seized with admirable sagacity.

In treating of Francis Moor, the brother of Schiller's Captain of the Robbers, Iffland examines in what manner the parts of villains should be played. "The actor," he says,

" must take pains to make it appear by what " motives the character has become what it " is, what circumstances have contributed to " the depravation of the soul; in short, the " actor should become the sedulous defender " of the part he represents." In fact, there can be no truth, even in villainy, unless we attend to the shades of character which evince that man becomes bad only by degrees.

Iffland reminds us also of the prodigious sensation excited, in the play of Emilia Galotti, by Ekhoff, formerly a very celebrated German actor. When Odoard is informed by the prince's mistress that the honour of his daughter is threatened, he wishes to conceal from this woman, whom he despises, the indignation and grief that she excites in his soul, and his hands, unknown to himself, were employed in tearing the plume on his hat, with a convulsive motion that produced an effect truly terrible. The actors who succeeded Eckhoff took care to tear their plumes also; but they fell to the ground without any body's remarking it; for genuine emotion was wanting, to give to the most indifferent actions that sublime truth which agitates the souls of the spectators.

Iffland's theory of gestures is very ingenious. He laughs at those arms of windmills that can answer no purpose but in the declamation of moral sentences: and he thinks that, in general, gestures few in number, and confined within narrow limits, give better indication of real passions; but in this respect, as in many others, there are two very distinct classes of talent, that which bears the character of poetical enthusiasm, and that which springs from the spirit of observation; the one or the other must predominate, according to the nature of the pieces and of the parts. The gestures which are inspired by grace, and by the sentiment of the beautiful, are not those best adapted to characterize particular personages. Poetry expresses perfection in general, rather than a peculiar mode of existence or feeling. The art of the tragic actor consists then in presenting in his attitudes the image of poetical beauty, without neglecting the distinguishing traits of character: the dominion of the arts always consists in the union of the ideal with the natural.

When I saw the play of *The Twenty-fourth of February*, performed by two celebrated poets, A. W. Schlegel and Werner, I was

singularly struck by their mode of declamation. They prepared their effects by long anticipation, and plainly discovered that they would have been vexed to be applauded at the beginning. The whole was always present to their thought; and a partial success, which might have injured that general effect, would have appeared to them only in the light of a fault. Schlegel made me first perceive, by his manner of acting in Werner's play, all the interest of a part which I had scarcely observed in the reading. It was the innocence of guilt, the unhappiness of a worthy man, who has committed a crime at the age of seven years, when he did not yet know what was crime; and who, although at peace with his conscience, has been unable to dissipate the uneasiness of his imagination. I judged the man who was represented before me, just as we penetrate a real character, by motions, looks, and accents, which betray it unconsciously. In France, the greater part of our actors never appear not to know what they are about; on the contrary, there is something studied in all the means they make use of, and the effect is always foreseen.

Schroeder, of whom all the Germans speak

as an admirable actor, could not bear to have it said that he played well at such or such a moment, or that he spoke well such or such a verse.—Have I played the part well? he would ask; have I been the very person I represented?—and, in fact, his genius seemed to change its nature with every change of part. In France they would not dare to recite tragedy, as he often did, in the ordinary tone of conversation. There is a general colour, an established accent, which is of strict necessity in the Alexandrian verse; and the most impassioned movements rest on this pedestal as on an essential postulate of art. The French actors, in general, look to receive applause, and deserve it, at almost every verse; the German actors pretend to it only at the conclusion of the piece, and scarcely ever obtain it sooner.

The diversity of scenes and of situations in the German pieces, necessarily gives room to much greater variety in the talents of the performers. The dumb show tells to more advantage; and the patience of the spectators permits a number of details which render the pathetic more natural. The wit of an actor, in France, consists almost entirely in decla-

mation; in Germany there is a much greater number of accessories to this principal art; and even speech itself is sometimes hardly necessary to affect the audience.

When Schroeder, playing the part of King Lear, in a German translation, was brought sleeping upon the stage, it is said that this sleep of wretchedness and old age, drew tears even before he was awakened, before his lamentations had made known his sufferings; and when he bore in his arms the body of his young daughter Cordelia, slain because she would not abandon him, nothing could be so fine as the strength given him by despair. A last hope supported him, he tried if Cordelia breathed still: he, so aged himself, could not believe that a being so young could have died already. A passionate grief, in an old man half consumed, produced the most distressing emotion.

The German actors, in general, may be justly censured for seldom putting in practice the knowledge of the arts of design, so largely spread abroad in their nation: their attitudes are not fine; the excess of their simplicity often degenerates into awkwardness, and they scarcely ever equal the French in the

nobleness and elegance of their deportment and motions. However, for some time past, the German actresses have studied the art of attitude, and perfect themselves in that sort of grace, which is so necessary on the stage.

In Germany they never applaud till the end of the act, or very seldom interrupt the actor to testify to him the admiration he inspires. The Germans look upon it as a sort of barbarism to disturb, by tumultuous marks of approbation, the deep emotion with which they love to be penetrated in silence. But this is an additional difficulty for the actors; for it requires an astonishing force of genius to dispense in declaiming, with the encouragement of the public. In an art which is entirely of emotion, assemblies of spectators communicate an all powerful electricity which nothing can supply.

From an habitual exercise in the practice of the heart, it may happen that a good actor, in repeating a performance, shall pass over the same tracks, and employ the same methods, without the spectators animate him anew; but the first inspiration almost always proceeded from them. A singular contrast deserves to be remarked. In those fine arts, of,

which the creation is solitary and reflective, we lose whatever is natural when we think of the public, and it is self-love only that makes us think of it. In those which are of sudden impression, above all in declamation, the noise of the plaudits acts upon the soul like the sound of military music. This animating sound makes the blood circulate more swiftly, and it is not cold vanity that is satisfied by it.

When a man of genius appears in France, in whatever line, he attains almost always to a degree of perfection without example; for he unites the boldness that makes him deviate from the common road to good taste, which it is of so much importance to preserve when the originality of talent does not suffer from it. It therefore seems to me that Talma may be cited as a model of boldness and moderation, of nature and of dignity. He possesses all the secrets of the different arts; his attitudes recal the fine statues of antiquity; his *draperie*, when he least thinks about it, is folded in all his motions, as if he had had time to arrange it with the greatest care. The expression of his countenance, that of his eye, ought to be studied by all painters. Sometimes he enters with his eyes

only half open, and, on a sudden, feeling makes rays of light spring from them which seem to illuminate the whole theatre.

The sound of his voice agitates from the moment he speaks, before even the sense of the words he utters can have excited any emotion. Where any descriptive poetry accidentally finds place in a tragedy, he has brought out its beauties with as much feeling as if he were Pindar himself reciting the odes of his own composition. Others have need of time to excite emotion, and they do well to take time for the purpose; but in the voice of this man there is I know not what magic which, at its first accents, awakens all the sympathies of the heart. The charm of music, of painting, of sculpture, of poetry, and, above all, of the language of the soul, these are the means he employs to develop in his auditor, all the force of the generous or of the terrible passions.

What knowledge of the human heart he displays in his manner of conceiving his parts! he becomes their second author by his accents and his physiognomy. When Œdipus relates to Jocasta how he has killed Laius, without knowing him, his recital begins thus: *J'étois*

jeune et superbe. Most actors, before him, thought it necessary to act the word *superbe*, and used to draw up their heads as a sign of it; Talma, who feels that all the recollections of the proud Œdipus begin to affect him in the nature of remorse, pronounces in a timid voice these words, calculated to remind him of a confidence that he has lost. Phorbas arrives from Corinth at the moment when Œdipus has first conceived doubts respecting his birth; he demands a private conference with him. Other actors, before Talma, made haste to turn to their followers, and dismiss them with an air of majesty; Talma remains with his eyes fixed upon Phorbas: he cannot lose him from his sight, and only makes a sign by waving his hand to those around him. He has said nothing yet, but his bewildered motions betray the trouble of his soul; and when, in the last act, he exclaims on quitting Jocasta,

Oui, Laïus est mon père et je suis votre fils,

we think we see open before us the cavern of Tænarus, into which mortals are dragged by perfidious destiny.

In Andromache, when Hermione, out of her senses, accuses Orestes of having assassinated Pyrrhus without her participation, Orestes answers,

Et ne m'avez-vous pas
Vous-même ici tantôt ordonné son trépas?

It is said that Le Kain, in reciting this verse, laid an emphasis on every word, as if to recal to Hermione all the circumstances of the order he had received from her. This would be very well before a judge; but, before a woman one loves, the despair of finding her unjust and cruel, is the only sentiment that fills the soul. It is thus that Talma conceives the situation; an exclamation escapes from the heart of Orestes: he pronounces the first words with emphasis, and those that follow with a sound of voice gradually weakening; his arms fall, his countenance becomes in an instant pale as death, and the emotion of the spectator augments in proportion as he seems to lose the power of expressing himself.

The manner in which Talma recites the succeeding monologue is sublime. The kind

of innocence that returns to the soul of Orestes only to torture it, when he repeats this verse:

J'assassine à regret un roi que je révère,

inspires a compassion which the genius of Racine itself could hardly have foreseen altogether. Great actors have almost always made trial of themselves in the madness of Orestes; but it is there above all that the grandeur of gestures and of features adds wonderfully to the effect of the despair. The power of grief is so much the more terrible, as it displays itself through the very repose and dignity of a noble nature

In pieces taken from the Roman History, Talma displays a talent of a very different nature, but not less remarkable in its way. We understand Tacitus better after having seen him perform the part of Nero; he manifests in that part a great sagacity; for it is only by sagacity that a virtuous mind seizes the symptoms of guilt; nevertheless, he produces a still stronger effect, I think, in those parts where we love to abandon ourselves, in listening to him, to the sentiments he expresses. He has done

Bayard, in Du Belloy's play, the service of setting him free from those airs of rodomontade which other authors had thought it necessary to bestow upon him; this Gascon hero is again become, thanks to Talma, as simple in tragedy as in history. His costume in this part, his plain and appropriate gestures, recal the statues of knights that we see in old churches, and we feel astonished that a man who possesses so truly the feeling of ancient art, has been able to transport himself also to the character of the middle ages.

Talma sometimes plays the part of Pharan in a tragedy by Ducis, on an Arabian subject, Abuffar. A number of enchanting verses sheds a wonderful charm over this tragedy; the colours of the east, the pensive melancholy of the south of Asia, the melancholy which belongs to those regions where the sun consumes instead of embellishing nature, make themselves admirably felt in this work. The same Talma, the Grecian, the Roman, the chivalrous, becomes an Arab of the desert, full of energy and of love; his looks are guarded, as if to avoid the heat of the sun's rays; his gestures evince an admirable alternation of indolence and impetuosity; some-

times fate overwhelms him, sometimes he appears more powerful than nature herself, and seems to triumph over her; the passion which devours him, the object of which is a woman whom he believes to be his sister, is concealed in his bosom; one would say, by his uncertain pace, that he wishes to fly from himself; his eyes turn themselves away from her he loves, his hands repel an image which he thinks he always sees at his side; and when at last he presses Salema to his heart, with this simple word, "*J'ai froid*," he finds means of expressing at once the shudder of soul, and the devouring ardour which he endeavours to hide.

Many faults may be found in the plays of Shakspeare adapted to our theatre by Ducis; but it would be great injustice to deny them beauties of the first order; the genius of Ducis is in his heart, and it is there that he is great. Talma performs his characters like a friend to the talent of this noble old man. The scene of the witches, in Macbeth, is changed into recitation on the French stage. Talma should be seen endeavouring to render something vulgar and uncouth in the accent of

the witches, and to preserve, at the same time, all the dignity exacted by our theatre.

Par des mots inconnus, ces êtres monstrueux
S'appeloient tour à tour, s'applaudissoient entre eux,
S'approchoient, me montroient avec un ris farouche;
Leur doigt mystérieux se posoit sur leur bouche.
Je leur parle, et dans l'ombre ils s'échappent soudain,
L'un avec un poignard, l'autre un sceptre à la main;
L'autre d'un long serpent serroit le corps livide;
Tous trois vers ce palais ont pris un vol rapide,
Et tous trois dans les airs, en fuyant loin de moi,
M'ont laissé pour adieu ces mots; *Tu seras roi.*

The low and mysterious voice of the actor in pronouncing these verses, the manner in which he placed his finger on his mouth, like the statue of silence, his look, which altered to express a horrible and repulsive recollection; all were combined to paint a species of the marvellous new to our theatre, and of which no former tradition could give any idea.

Othello has not latterly succeeded on the French stage; it seems as if Orosmane prevented our rightly understanding Othello; but when Talma performs this part, the fifth act occasions as strong an emotion as if the assasination actually passed before our eyes; I have seen Talma, in private company,

declaim the last scene with his wife, whose voice and figure are so well suited to Desdemona; it was enough for him to pass his hand over his hair, and knit his brow, in order to become the Moor of Venice, and terror occupied all the distance of two paces from him, as if all the illusions of the theatre had encompased him.

Hamlet is his glory among the tragedies of foreign style; the spectators do not see the ghost of Hamlet's father on the French stage, the apparition passes only in the physiognomy of Talma, and it is certainly not at all the less terrifying. When, in the midst of a calm and melancholy conversation, he all at once perceives the spectre, all his motions are followed in the eyes that contemplate him, and we cannot doubt the presence of the phantom attested by such a look.

When Hamlet enters alone in the third act, and recites in fine French verses the famous soliloquy, *To be or not to be,*

La mort, c'est le sommeil, c'est un réveil peut-être,
Peut-être.—Ah! c'est le mot qui glace, epouvanté,
L'homme, au bord du cercueil, par le doute arrêté;
Devant ce vaste abîme, il se jette en arrière,
Ressaisit l'existence, et s'attache à la terre;

Talma used no gesture, he only sometimes shook his head as if to question earth and heaven respecting the nature of death. Without motion, the dignity of meditation absorbed all his being. He was one man, among two thousand silent spectators, interrogating thought concerning the destiny of mortals! In a few years all that was there will exist no longer; but others will assist in their turn at the same uncertainties, and will plunge, in like manner, into the abyss without knowing its depth.

When Hamlet wishes to make his mother swear, on the urn that encloses the ashes of her husband, that she had no part in the crime which caused his destruction, she hesitates, is troubled, and ends by confessing her guilt. Then Hamlet draws the dagger which his father commands him to plunge into the maternal bosom; but at the moment when he is about to strike, tenderness and compassion overcome him, and, turning back towards the shade of his father, he exclaims, *Grace, grace, mon père!* with an accent in which all the emotions of nature seem at once to escape from the heart, and throwing himself at the feet of his mother, who has swooned away,

he speaks to her these two lines, which contain a sentiment of inexhaustible pity,

> Votre crime est horrible, exécrable, odieux,
> Mais il n'est pas plus grand que la bonté des cieux,

To conclude, it is impossible to think of Talma without recollecting Manlius. This piece produced little effect on the stage: it is the subject of Otway's Venice Preserved, applied to an event of Roman History. Manlius conspires against the senate of Rome, he confides his secret to Servilius, whom he has loved for fifteen years: he confides it to him in spite of the suspicions of his other friends, who distrust the weakness of Servilius, and his love for his wife, the consul's daughter. What the conspirators feared actually takes place. Servilius is unable to hide from his wife the danger to which her father's life is exposed: she immediately runs to reveal it to him. Manlius is arrested, his projects discovered, and the senate condemns him to be thrown headlong from the Tarpeian hill.

Before Talma, people had scarcely discovered in this piece, which is feebly written, the passion of friendship which Manlius experiences for Servilius. When a note of the

conspirator Rutilius gives to understand that the secret is betrayed, and betrayed by Servilius, Manlius enters with this note in his hand; he draws nigh to his guilty friend, already devoured by remorse, and shewing him the lines which accuse him, pronounces these words, *Qu'en dis-tu?* I ask all who have heard them, can the countenance and the tone of the voice ever express, at one time, so many different impressions; that rage, softened by an inward feeling of pity, that indignation, rendered by friendship alternately more lively and more feeble, how make them understood, if not by that accent which passes from soul to soul, without the intermediate office even of words! Manlius draws his dagger to strike Servilius with it, his hand seeks his heart, and trembles lest it should find it: the remembrance of so many years, during which Servilius was dear to him, raises as it were a cloud of tears between his revenge and his friend.

The fifth act has been less spoken of, and yet Talma is perhaps still more admirable in that than in the fourth. Servilius has encountered all hazards to expiate his fault, and preserve Manlius. At the bottom of his heart

he has resolved, if his friend should perish, to partake his lot. The grief of Manlius is softened by the regret of Servilius; nevertheless he dares not tell him that he forgives his frightful treason: but he takes the hand of Servilius in private, and presses it to his heart; his involuntary motions seek the guilty friend, whom he wishes to embrace once more before he parts from him for ever. Nothing, or scarcely any thing in the play itself, pointed out this admirable beauty of a feeling soul still paying respect to ancient affection, in spite of the treason that has broken it. The parts of Pierre and Jaffier in the English play indicate this situation very forcibly. Talma has found means of giving to the tragedy of Manlius the energy it wants, and nothing does so much honour to his talent, as the truth with which he expresses the invincibility of friendship. Passion may hate the object of its love; but when the tie is formed by the sacred relations of the soul, it seems that crime itself is incapable of destroying it, and that we look for remorse just as, after a long absence, we should look for the return.

In speaking somewhat in detail about

Talma, I do not consider myself as having rested on a subject foreign to that of my work. This artist gives as much as possible to French tragedy of what, either justly or unjustly, the Germans accuse it of wanting: originality and nature. He knows how to characterize foreign manners in the different parts he represents, and no actor more frequently hazards great effects by simple expedients. In his mode of declaiming, he has artificially combined Shakspeare and Racine together. Why should not dramatic writers endeavour also to unite in their compositions what the actor has been able to amalgamate so happily in his performance?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Of Novels.

Of all fictions, novels being the most easy, there is no career in which the writers of modern nations have more generally essayed themselves. The novel constitutes what may be called the transition between real and imaginary existence. The history of every individual is, with some modifications, a novel sufficiently similar to those which are printed, and personal recollections often, in this respect, take place of invention. It has been attempted to give more importance to this species of compositions, by mixing with it poetry, history, and philosophy; but it seems to me that this is to alter its nature. Moral reflections, and empassioned eloquence, may find room in novels; but the interest of situations ought always to be the first principle of action in this sort of writings, and nothing can ever properly supply its place. If theatrical effect is the indispensable condition for

all pieces for representation, it is equally true that a novel can be neither a good work, nor a happy fiction, unless it inspires a lively curiosity; it is in vain that we would supply the want of this by ingenious digressions, the expectation of amusement frustrated, would cause an insurmountable fatigue.

The multitude of love tales published in Germany has somewhat turned into ridicule the light of the moon, the harps that resound at evening through the valley, in short all known and approved methods of softly soothing the soul; and yet we are endued with a natural disposition that delights itself in these easy sorts of reading, and it is the part of genius to take hold of a disposition which it would be in vain to think of combating. It is so sweet to love and to be loved, that this hymn of life is susceptible of infinite modulation, without the heart experiencing any lassitude; thus we return with pleasure to the first melody of a song embellished by brilliant variations. I shall not however dissemble that novels, even those which are most pure, do mischief; they have too well discovered to us the most secret recesses of sentiment. Nothing can be experienced that we do not

remember to have read before, and all the veils of the heart have been rent. The ancients would never thus have made of the human soul a subject of fiction; it remained a sanctuary for them, into which their own looks would have feared to penetrate; but in fine, if the class of novels is once admitted, there must be interest in it; and it is, as Cicero said of action in his Orator, the condition trebly necessary.

The Germans, like the English, are very fertile in novels descriptive of domestic life. The delineation of manners is more elegant in the English, but more diversified in the German. There is in England, notwithstanding the independence of characters, a generality of manner inspired by good company; in Germany nothing of this sort is matter of convention. Many of these novels, founded on our sentiments and manners, which hold among books the rank of dramas in the theatre, deserve to be cited; but that which is without equal and without parallel is Werther: there we behold all that the genius of Goëthe was capable of producing when empassioned. It is said that he now attaches little value to this work of his youth; the

effervesence of imagination, which inspired him almost with enthusiasm for suicide, may now appear to him deserving of censure. In youth, the degradation of existence not having yet any commencement, the tomb appears only a poetical image, a sleep surrounded with figures weeping for us on their knees; it is no longer the same in middle life, and we then learn why religion, that science of the soul, has mingled the horror of murder with the attempt upon one's own existence.

Nevertheless, Goëthe would be much in the wrong did he despise the admirable talent that is discoverable in Werther: it is not only the sufferings of love, but the maladies of the imagination, so prevalent in our times, of which he has painted the picture: those thoughts that press into the mind, without our being able to change them into acts of the will; the singular contrast of a life much more monotonous than that of the ancients, and of an internal existence much more tumultuous, cause a sort of dizziness like that which we experience on the brink of a precipice, when the very fatigue of long contemplating the abyss below may urge us to throw ourselves headlong. Goëthe has been able to

join to this picture of the inquietudes of the soul, so philosophical in its result, a fiction, simple, but of prodigious interest. If it has been thought necessary in all the sciences to strike the eyes by outward images, is it not natural to interest the heart, in order to impress it with grand sentiments?

Novels, in letters, always suppose more of sentiment than of fact; the ancients would never have thought of giving this form to their fictions; and it is only for two centuries past that philosophy has been sufficiently introduced into ourselves, to enable the analysis of our feelings to hold so great a place in our books. This manner of conceiving novels is certainly not so poetical as that which consists entirely in recitation; but the human mind is now much less disposed to be gratified by events even the best combined, than by observations on what passes within the heart. This disposition is the consequence of those great intellectual changes that have taken place in man: he has in general a much greater tendency to fall back upon himself, and to seek religion, love, and sentiment, in the most inward recesses of his being.

Many German writers have composed tales of ghosts and witches, and think that there is more of genius in these inventions, than in a romance founded on the circumstances of ordinary life: it is very well for those who are led to it by natural inclination; but in general verse is necessary for the marvellous, prose is inadequate to it. When ages and countries, very different from those we live in, are represented in fiction, the charm of poetry must supply the want of that pleasure which the resemblance to ourselves would make us experience. Poetry is the winged mediator that transports times past and foreign nations into a sublime region, where admiration fills the place of sympathy.

Romances of chivalry abound in Germany; but they should have been more scrupulous in fastening them upon ancient traditions; at present, they take the trouble of investigating these precious sources; and in a book called "The Book of Heroes," they have found a number of adventures related with force and naïveté; it is of importance to preserve the colour of this ancient style and of these ancient manners, and not to prolong, by the analysis of sentiments, the recitals of

times in which honour and love acted on the heart of man, like the fatality of the ancients, without their reflecting on the motives of actions, or admitting any uncertainty into their operations.

Philosophical romance has, for some time past, taken the lead, in Germany, of all other sorts; it does not resemble that of the French; it is not, like Voltaire's, a general idea expressed by a fact in form of apologue, but it is a picture of human life altogether impartial, a picture in which no empassioned interest predominates; different situations succeed each other in all ranks, in all conditions, in all circumstances; and the writer is present to relate them. It is upon these principles that Goëthe has conceived his *Wilhelm Meister* a work greatly admired in Germany, but little known elsewhere.

Wilhelm Meister is full of ingenious and lively discussions; it would make a philosophical work of the first order, if the intrigue of a novel were not introduced into it, the interest of which is not worth what is sacrificed to it; we find in it very delicate and minute pictures of a certain class of society, more numerous in Germany than in other

countries; a class in which artists, players, and adventurers, mix with those of the bourgeois who love an independent life, and with those of the nobility who esteem themselves the protectors of the arts; every picture, taken separately, is charming; but there is no other interest in the tout-ensemble but what we may feel in knowing the opinion of Goëthe on every subject; the hero of his novel is an intruding third person whom he has placed, we know not why, between himself and his reader.

Amidst all these personages in Wilhelm Meister, more intelligent than important, and these situations so much more natural than prominent, a charming episode is scattered through many parts of the work, in which is united all that the warmth and originality of genius of Goëthe is capable of producing of most animated. A young Italian girl is the child of love, and of a criminal and frightful love, which has taken hold of a man consecrated by oath to the worship of the divinity; the lovers, already so culpable, discover after their marriage that they are brother and sister, and that incest has been rendered for them the punishment of perjury. The mother

loses her reason, and the father runs over the world like an unhappy wanderer who refuses any shelter. The miserable fruit of this fatal love, without support from its birth, is carried away by a troop of rope-dancers they exercise it to the age of ten years, in the wretched play which constitutes their own subsistence; the cruel treatment they make it undergo excites the interest of Wilhelm, and he takes into his service this young girl, in the dress of a boy, which she has worn ever since her birth.

There is developed in this extraordinary creature, a singular mixture of childishness and depth of understanding, of seriousness and imagination; ardent like the women of Italy, silent and persevering like a person of reflection, speech does not seem to be her natural language. The few words she utters, however, are solemn, and answerable to sentiments much stronger than those natural to her age, and of which she does not herself possess the secret. She becomes attached to Wilhelm with love and reverence; she serves him as a faithful domestic, she loves him as an empassioned wife: her life having been always unhappy, it seems as if she had never

known childhood, and as if having been doomed to suffering in an age which nature has destined only for enjoyments, she existed only for one solitary affection with which the beatings of her heart begin and end.

The character of Mignon (this is the young girl's name) is mysterious like a dream ; she expresses her regret of Italy in some enchanting verses which all people know by heart in Germany: " Dost thou know the land where " citron-trees flourish?" &c. In the end, jealousy, that passion too strong for so tender organs, breaks the heart of the poor girl, who becomes a prey to grief before age has given her strength to struggle against it.

To comprehend all the effect of this admirable picture, it would be necessary to enter into all the details of it. We cannot represent to ourselves without emotion the least of the feelings that agitate this young girl; there is in her I know not what of magic simplicity, that supposes a profundity of thought and feeling; we think we hear the tempest moaning at the bottom of her soul, even while we are unable to fix upon a word or a circumstance to account for the inexpressible uneasiness she makes us feel.

Notwithstanding this beautiful episode, we perceive in Wilhelm Meister the singular system that has developed itself of late in the German school: the recitals of the ancients, even their poems, however internally animated, are calm in appearance; and we are persuaded that the moderns would do well to imitate the tranquillity of the ancient authors; but in respect of imagination, what is not prescribed in theory seldoms succeeds in practice. Events like those of the Iliad interest of themselves, and the less the author's own sentiments are brought forward, the greater is the impression made by the picture; but if we set ourselves to describe romantic situations with the impartial calmness of Homer, the result could hardly be very alluring.

Goëthe has just produced a novel called *The Affinities of Choice*, which is extremely obnoxious to the censure I have been remarking. A happy family has retired into the country; the husband and wife invite, the one his friend, the other her niece, to partake their solitude; the friend falls in love with the wife, and the husband with the young girl, her niece. He abandons himself to the idea of recurring to a divorce in order to procure

an union with the object of his attachment; the young girl is ready to consent: unfortunate events happen to bring her back to the feeling of duty; but as soon as she is brought to acknowledge the necessity of sacrificing her love, she dies of grief, and her lover shortly follows her.

The translation of *The Affinities of Choice* has not met with success in France, because there is nothing characteristic in the general effect of the fable, and it is difficult to comprehend with what view it was conceived; this uncertainty is not a matter for censure in Germany: as the events of this world often furnish only undecided results, people are satisfied to find in novels which pretend to describe them the same contradictions and the same doubts. Goëthe's work contains a number of refined sentiments and observations; but it is true that the interest often languishes, and that we find almost as many vacancies in the novel as in the ordinary course of human life. A novel, however, ought not to resemble the memoirs of individuals; for every thing is a matter of interest in what has really existed, while fiction can only equal the effect of truth by surpassing it, that is to say, by

possessing greater strength, more unity, and more action.

The description of the Baron's garden and the embellishments made in it by the Baroness, absorbs more than a third part of the whole story; and it does not dispose the reader to be moved by a tragic catastrophe: the death of the hero and heroine seems no more than a fortuitous accident, from the heart not being long beforehand prepared to feel and to partake the pain they suffer. This work affords a singular mixture of a life of convenience with stormy passions; an imagination full of grace and strength draws near to the production of grand effects to let them go all of a sudden, as if it were not worth the pain to bring them forth; one would say that the author has been injured by his own emotion, and that by mere cowardice of heart he lays aside the one-half of his talent for fear of making himself suffer in trying to move his readers.

A more important question is, whether such a work is moral, that is, whether the impression derived from it is favourable to the improvement of the soul? The mere events of a fiction have nothing to do with this question; we so

well know their dependence on the will of the author, that they can awaken the conscience of no man; the morality of a novel consists therefore in the sentiments it inspires. It cannot be denied that there is in Goëthe's book a profound knowledge of the human heart, but it is a discouraging knowledge: it represents life as at best very indifferent in whatever manner it passes; when probed to the bottom, sad and mournful, only tolerably agreeable when slightly skimmed over, liable to moral diseases which must be cured if possible, and must kill if they cannot be cured. The passions exist, the virtues also exist; there are some who assure us that the first must be counteracted by the second; others pretend that this cannot be; see and judge, says the writer who sums up with impartiality the arguments which fate may furnish for and against each method of viewing the subject.

It would be wrong to imagine, however, that this scepticism was inspired by the materializing tendency of the eighteenth century; the opinions of Goëthe are much more profound, but they do not present any greater consolation to the soul. His writings offer

to us a contemptuous philosophy that says to good as well as to evil: It ought to be so because it is so; a wonderful imagination, which rules over all the other faculties, and grows tired of genius itself, as having in it something too involuntary and too partial; to conclude, what is most of all defective in this romance is a firm and positive feeling of religion; the principal personages are more accessible to superstition, than to faith; and we perceive that in their hearts, religion, like love, is only the effect of circumstances, and liable to vary with them.

In the progress of this work, the author displays too much uncertainty; the forms he draws and the opinions he indicates leave only doubtful recollections; it must be agreed that to think a great deal sometimes leads to the total unsettling of our fundamental ideas; but a man of genius like Goëthe should serve as a guide to his admirers in an ascertained road. It is no longer time to doubt, it is no longer time to place, on every possible subject, ingenious ideas in each scale of the balance; we should now abandon ourselves to confidence, to enthusiasm, to the admiration which the immortal youth of the soul

may always keep alive within us; this youth springs forth again out of the very ashes of the passions: it is the golden bough that can never fade, and which gives entrance to the Sibyl into the Elysian fields.

Tieck deserves to be mentioned in many different styles of composition; he is the author of a novel called Sternbald, which must be read with great delight; the events are but few, and even those few are not conducted to the dénouement; but we can no where else, I believe, meet with so pleasing a picture of the life of an artist: the author places his hero in the fine age of the arts, and supposes him to be a scholar of Albert Durer, the contemporary of Raphael. He makes him travel in different countries of Europe, and paints with the charm of novelty the pleasure that must be caused by external objects when we belong to no country and no station exclusively, but are at liberty to range through all nature in search of inspiration and example. This state of existence, wandering and at the same time contemplative, is thoroughly understood no where but in Germany. In French romances we always describe social manners and the intercourse of society; yet

there is a great secret of enjoyment in this sort of imagination, which seems to hover over the earth while it traverses, and mixes not at all in the active interests of the world.

Unhappy mortals hardly ever receive from fate the blessing a destiny in which the events succeed each other in the regular concatenation they wish for; but insulated impressions are for the most part sufficiently gentle, and the present, when it can be contemplated apart from recollections and apprehensions, is still the happiest moment of life. There is a sort of poetical philosophy, then, of great wisdom in those instantaneous enjoyments which compose the artist's existence; the new points of view, the accidents of light which embellish them, are for him so many events that have their beginning and ending in the same day, and have nothing to do with the past or the future; the affections of the heart unveil the face of nature, and we are astonished, in reading Tieck's novel, by all the wonders that surround us without our perceiving it.

The author has mingled in his work several detached pieces of poetry, some of which are extremely fine. When verses are introduced

into a French novel, they almost always interrupt the interest, and destroy the harmony of the whole. It is not so in Sternbald; the story is so poetical in itself, that the prose seems like a recitative which follows the verse, or prepares the way for it. Among others, there are some stanzas on the spring, as enchanting as nature herself at that season. Infancy is represented in them under a thousand different shapes; man, the plants, the earth, the heaven, all things there are so young, all things so rich in hope, that the poet appears to be celebrating the first fine days, and the first flowers, that ever attired the world.

We have, in French, several comic romances, and one of the most remarkable is Gil Blas. I do not think any work can be mentioned among the Germans, in which the affairs of life are so agreeably sported with. The Germans have hardly yet attained a real world, how can they be supposed capable already of laughing at it? That serious kind of gaiety which turns nothing into ridicule, but amuses without intending it, and makes others laugh without laughing itself; that gaiety, which the English call *humour*, is to be found also

in many of the German writers; but it is almost impossible to translate them. When the pleasantry consists in a philosophical sentiment happily expressed, as in Swift's Gulliver, the change of language is of no importance; but Sterne's Tristram Shandy loses almost all its beauty in French. Pleasantries, which consist in the forms of language, speak to the mind a thousand times more, perhaps, than ideas; and yet these impressions so lively, excited by shades of refinement so subtle, are incapable of being transmitted to foreigners.

Claudius is one of the German authors who have most of that national gaiety, the exclusive property of every foreign literature. He has published a collection of various detached pieces on different subjects; some are in bad taste, others unimportant, but there reigns in all of them an originality and a truth which render the least things attractive. This writer, whose style is clothed in a simple, and sometimes even in a vulgar, habit, penetrates to the bottom of the heart, by the sincerity of his sentiments. He makes you weep, as he makes you laugh, by exciting sympathy, and by giving you to recognize a fellow-creature

and a friend in all he feels. Nothing can be extracted from the writings of Claudius, his talent acts like sensation, and to speak of it, it is necessary to have felt it. He resembles those Flemish painters who sometimes rise to the representation of what is most noble in nature, or to the Spanish Murillos, who paints poor beggars with the utmost exactness, and yet often gives them, unconsciously, some traits of a noble and profound impression. To mix the comic and the pathetic with success, it is necessary to be eminently natural in both; as soon as the artificial makes its appearance, all contrast vanishes; but a genius full of simplicity may successfully represent an union, of which the only charm is on the countenance of childhood, a smile in the midst of tears.

Another writer, of later date and greater celebrity than Claudius, has acquired great reputation in Germany by works which might be called novels, if any known denomination could suit productions so extraordinary. J. Paul Richter is possessed of powers certainly more than sufficient to compose a work that would be as interesting to foreigners as to his own countrymen, and yet nothing

that he has published can ever extend beyond the limits of Germany. His admirers will say that this results from the originality even of his genius; I think that his faults are as much the cause of it as his excellencies. In these modern times, the mind should be European; the Germans encourage their authors too much in that wandering spirit of enterprise, which, daring as it seems, is not always void of affectation. Madame de Lambert said to her son:—my friend, indulge yourself in no follies that will not afford you a very high degree of pleasure.—We might beg J. Paul never to be singular except in spite of himself; whatever is said involuntarily always hits some natural feeling; but when natural originality is spoiled by the pretension to originality, the reader has no perfect enjoyment even of what is true, from the remembrance and the dread of what is otherwise.

Some admirable beauties are to be found, nevertheless, in the works of J. Paul; but the arrangement and frame of his pictures are so defective that the most luminous traits of genius are lost in the general confusion. The writings of J. Paul deserve to be considered in two points of view, the pleasant and the

serious, for he constantly mixes both together. His manner of observing the human heart is full of delicacy and vivacity, but his knowledge of it is merely such as may be acquired in the little towns of Germany, and in his delineation of manners, confined as it is, there is frequently something too innocent for the age in which we live. Observations so delicate and almost minute, on the moral affections, recal a little to our recollection the personage in the fairy tales who went by the name of Fine-Ear, because he could hear the grass grow. In this respect Sterne bears some analogy to J. Paul; but if Paul is very superior to him in the serious and poetical part of his works, Sterne has more taste and elegance in his pleasantry, and we see that he has lived in societies less confined and more brilliant.

Thoughts extracted from the writings of J. Paul, would however form a very remarkable work; but we perceive in reading them his singular custom of collecting from every quarter, from obsolete books, scientific works, &c., all his metaphors and allusions. The resemblances thus produced are almost always very ingenious: but when study and attention

are required to enable us to find out a jest, scarcely any but the Germans would consent thus to laugh after a serious study, and give themselves as much trouble to understand what amuses them, as what is calculated for their instruction.

At the bottom of all this, we find a mine of new ideas, and if we reach it, we are enriched; but the author has neglected the stamp which should have been given to those treasures. The gaiety of the French is derived from the spirit of society; that of the Italians from the imagination; that of the English from originality of character; the gaiety of the Germans is philosophic; they jest with things and with books, rather than with men; their heads contain a chaos of knowledge, which an independent and fantastic imagination combines in a thousand different ways, sometimes original, sometimes confused; but in which we always perceive great vigour of intellect and of soul.

The genius of J. Paul frequently resembles that of Montaigne. The French authors of former times are in general more like the Germans, than writers of the age of Louis

XIV; for it is since that time that French literature has taken a classical direction.

Paul Richter is often sublime in the serious parts of his works; but the continued melancholy strain of his language sometimes moves till it fatigues us. When the imagination is kept too long in the clouds, the colours are confused, the outlines are effaced, and we retain of all that we have read, rather a reverberation of the sound, than a recollection of the substance. The sensibility of J. Paul affects the soul, but does not sufficiently strengthen it. The poetry of his style resembles the sounds of an harmonica, which delight us at first, but give us pain a few minutes afterwards, because the exaltation excited by them has no determinate object. We give too great an advantage to cold and insipid characters, when we represent sensibility to them as a disease, while, on the contrary, it is the most energetic of all our moral faculties, since it imparts both the desire and ability to devote ourselves to the welfare of others.

Amongst the affecting episodes which abound in the writings of J. Paul, where the

principal subjects are seldom more than slight pretexts to introduce the episodes, I will now quote three, taken by chance, to give an idea of the rest. An English lord is blind in consequence of a double cataract, he has an operation performed on one of his eyes; it fails, and that eye is lost without resource. His son, without informing him of it, studies with an oculist, and at the end of a year, he is judged capable of operating on the eye which may yet be preserved. The father, ignorant of his son's intention, thinks he is placing himself in the hands of a stranger, and prepares himself with fortitude for the moment which is to decide whether the rest of his life is, or is not, to be passed in darkness; he even directs that his son should be sent from his chamber, that he may not be too much affected by being present at so important a decision. The son approaches his father in silence; his hand does not tremble; for the circumstance is too momentous to admit of the common signs of tenderness. All his soul is concentered in a simple thought, and even the excess of his sensibility gives that supernatural presence of mind, which would be succeeded by frenzy, if hope were

lost. At length the operation succeeds, and the father, in recovering his sight, beholds the instrument of its restoration in the hand of his own son!

Another novel by the same author also presents a very affecting situation.—A young blind man requests a description of the setting sun, whose mild and pure rays, he says, he feels in the atmosphere, like the farewell of a friend. The person whom he interrogates, describes nature to him in all its beauty; but he mingles in his painting an impression of melancholy, calculated to console the unfortunate being who is deprived of sight. He incessantly appeals to the Deity, as to the living source of the wonders of the world; and bringing every thing within the scope of that intellectual sight which the blind man probably enjoys in a more perfect manner than we do, he makes his soul perceive what his eyes can no longer behold.

I will now venture a translation of a very strange composition, but which will assist us in forming an opinion of the genius of John Paul.

Bayle has somewhere said, that "atheism "does not shelter us from the fear of eternal

" suffering:" it is a grand thought, and it offers to us a wide field for reflection. The dream of J. Paul which I am now going to mention, may be considered as this thought extended to action.

This dream in some measure resembles the delirium of a fever, and ought to be considered as such. In every respect except that of displaying the powers of imagination, it is extremely liable to censure.

" The intention of this fiction," says John Paul, " will excuse the boldness of it. If my " heart were ever so wretched, so dried up, " as that all the sentiments which affirm the " existence of a God, were annihilated in it, " I would again read over these pages; they " would deeply affect me, and in their peru- " sal, I should recover my hope of salvation " and my faith. Some men deny the exist- " ence of a God with as much indifference as " others admit it; and it is possible to believe " in it for twenty years, and yet not perhaps " till the twenty-first to find the solemn " moment in which with transport we dis- " cover the rich accompaniment of that be- " lief, the vivifying heat of that fountain of " naphtha.

"A Dream.

"When, in childhood, we are told that "towards midnight, at the hour when sleep "has most power over our souls, dreams "become more troubled, the dead rise from "their graves, and in solitary churches, "imitate the pious practices of the living; "death frightens us on account of the dead. "When darkness approaches, we turn our "eyes from the church and its blackened "casements; the terrors of childhood, still "more than its pleasures, take wings and "flutter round us during the night of the "lightly slumbering soul. Ah! extinguish not "those scintillations; leave us our dreams, "however sad. They are still more pleasing "than our real existence; they bring us back "to that age in which the stream of life still "receives a reflection of the heavens.

"I was reclining one summer evening, on "the summit of a hill, and falling asleep "there, I dreamt, that I awoke in the middle "of the night in a churchyard. The clock "struck eleven. The tombs were all half "open, and the iron gates of the church, "moved by an invisible hand, opened and

" shut again with great noise. I saw shadows
" flitting along the walls, which were not cast
" on it by any bodily substance: other livid
" spectres rose in the air, and children alone
" still reposed in their coffins. There was a
" greyish heavy stifling cloud in the sky,
" which was strained and compressed into
" long folds by a gigantic phantom. Above
" me I heard the distant fall of avalanches,
" and under my feet the first commotion of a
" mighty earthquake. The church shook, and
" the air was agitated by piercing and dis-
" cordant sounds.

" The pale lightning cast a mournful light.
" I felt myself impelled by terror to seek
" shelter in the temple: two splendid basilics
" were placed before its formidable gates.

" I advanced amidst the crowd of unknown
" shades on whom the seal of ancient ages
" was imprinted; they all pressed round the
" despoiled altar, and their breasts only
" breathed and were agitated with violence;
" one corpse alone which had been lately
" buried in the church, reposed on its wind-
" ing sheet; there was yet no motion in its
" breast, and a pleasing dream gave a smile
" to its countenance; but at the approach of

" a living being it awoke, ceased to smile, and " opened its heavy eyelids with a painful " effort; the socket of the eye was empty, " and where the heart had been, there was " only a deep wound; it raised its hands and " joined them to pray, but the arms length- " ened, were detached from the body, and " the clasped hands fell to the earth.

" In the vaulted ceiling of the church was " placed the dial of eternity; no figures or " index were there, but a black hand went " slowly round, and the dead endeavoured to " read on it the lapse of time.

" From the high places, there then de- " scended on the altar a figure beaming with " light, noble, elevated, but who bore the " impression of never-ending sorrow; the " dead cried out: O Christ! is there then no " God? he replied: There is none.—All the " spectres then began to tremble violently, " and Christ continued thus: I have traversed " worlds, I have raised myself above their " suns, and there also, there is no God; I " have descended to the lowest limits of the " universe, I looked into the abyss, and I " cried:—O Father, where art thou? yet I " heard nothing but the rain which fell drop

" by drop into the abyss, and the everlasting
" and ungovernable tempest alone answered
" me. Then raising my regards to the vault
" of heaven, I saw only an empty orbit, dark
" and bottomless. Eternity reposed on chaos,
" and in gnawing it, slowly also devoured
" itself; redouble then your bitter and pierc-
" ing complaints; may shrill cries disperse
" your spirits, for all hope is over.

" The spectres in despair vanished like the
" white vapour condensed by the frost; the
" church was soon deserted; but all at once
" (terrific sight) the dead children, who were
" now awakened in their turn in the church-
" yard, ran and prostrated themselves before
" the majestic figure which was on the altar,
" saying to him:—Jesus, have we no father?
" —and he replied with a torrent of tears:—
" We are all orphans, neither I nor you have
" any father.—At these words, the temple
" and the children were swallowed up, and
" all the edifice of the world sunk before me
" into the immensity of space."

I shall add no observations on this singular essay, the effect of which must depend entirely on the species of imagination possessed by the reader. I was struck by the gloomy cast

of the talents it displays, and it appeared to me a fine idea, thus to carry beyond the grave the horrible despair which every creature would necessarily feel if deprived of God.

I should never lay down my pen if I were to analyse the multitude of witty and affecting novels to be found in Germany. Those of La Fontaine in particular, which are read at least once by every one with so much pleasure, are frequently more interesting in the detail than of the general plan or conception of the subject. To invent becomes daily more uncommon; and besides, novels which delineate manners, can with difficulty be rendered pleasing in different countries. The great advantage, therefore, which may be derived from the study of German literature, is the spirit of emulation which it imparts; we should rather seek in it the means of writing well ourselves, than expect from it works already written which may be worthy of being transmitted to other nations.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Of German Historians, and of J. de Müller in particular.

HISTORY is the portion of literature most nearly connected with the knowledge of public affairs; a great historian is almost a statesman; for it is scarcely possible to form a right judgment of political events, without being, in a certain degree, able also to conduct them; thus we see that the greater number of historians are well acquainted with the government of their country, and write only as they might have acted. In the first rank of historians we must reckon those of antiquity, because there is no period in which men of superior talents have exerted more influence over their country. The English historians occupy the second rank; but the appellation of great, belongs rather to their nation, than to any particular individual; and its historians are therefore less dramatic, but more philosophical than those of ancient times. The English affix

more importance to general, than to particular ideas. In Italy, Machiavel is the only historian who has considered the events of his country in a comprehensive, though in a terrible manner; all the others have seen the world in their own city; but this patriotism, confined as it is, still imparts interest and spirit to the writings of Italy.* It has been always remarked that in France, memoirs are much better than histories; the intrigues of courts formerly determined the fate of the kingdom, it was therefore very natural that in such a country, private anecdotes should contain the secret of history.

It is under a literary point of view that we should consider the German historians; the political existence of the country has not hitherto had power to give a national character to that class of writers. The talents peculiar to each individual, and the general principles of the historic art, have alone influenced this sort of production of the human mind. It appears to me that the various his-

* M. de Sismundi has, in his writings, revived the partial interests of the Italian republics, by connecting them with the great subjects of enquiry which are interesting to the whole human race.

torical writings published in Germany, may be divided into three principal classes: learned history, philosophical history, and classical history, as far as the acceptation of that word is confined, as the ancients understood it to be, to the art of narration.

Germany abounds with learned historians, such as Mascou, Schöpflin, Schlözer, Gatterer, Schmidt, &c. They have made profound researches, and have given us works where every thing is to be found by those who know how to study them; but such writers are fit only to refer to, and their works would be beyond all others estimable and liberal, if their only object had been to spare trouble to men of genius, who are desirous of writing history.

Schiller is at the head of the philosophical historians, that is to say, of those who consider facts as so many reasons for the support of their own opinions. The History of the Revolution in the Low Countries is written with as much warmth and interest, as if it were a plea in a court of justice. The Thirty Years War is an epoch which called forth the energies of the German nation. Schiller has written its history with a sentiment of patrio-

tism and love of knowlege and liberty, which does great credit both to his heart and his genius; the traits with which he characterizes the principal personages, are of a very superior kind, and all his reflections are derived from the concentrations of an elevated mind; but the Germans reproach Schiller with not having sufficiently traced facts up to their sources; he could not entirely fill the great outlines chalked out by his uncommon talents; and the erudition on which his history is founded is not sufficiently extensive. I have frequently had occasion to observe, that the Germans were the first to feel all the advantages which imagination might derive from learning; circumstantial details alone give colour and life to history: on the surface of our knowledge we scarcely find any thing more than a pretext for reason and argument.

Schiller's history was written in that part of the eighteenth century, when ideas were used only as weapons of hostile argument, and his style is a little tinctured with the polemical spirit so prevalent in almost all the writings of that period. But when the object aimed at is toleration and liberty, and that we advance towards it by means and sentiments so noble

as those of Schiller, we are always sure of composing a fine work, even though more or less room might be desirable in the part assigned to facts and reflections.* By a singular contrast, it is Schiller, the great dramatic poet, who has mingled perhaps too much philosophy, and consequently too many general ideas in his narrations, and it is Müller, the most learned of historians, who has been truly a poet in his manner of describing both men and events. In the History of Switzerland we must distinguish the learned man and the able writer; and I think it is only by this means that we shall succeed in doing justice to Müller. He was a man of unparalleled knowledge, and his abilities in that respect, really frightened those who were acquainted with them. We cannot conceive how the head of one man could contain such a world of facts and of dates. The six thousand years which are known to us, were perfectly arranged in his memory, and his studies had been so deep, that they were as fresh as if

* Amongst philosophical historians, we must not forget M. Heeren, who has just published "Thoughts on the "Crusaders," in which perfect impartiality is the result of uncommon knowledge and strength of judgment.

they were recollections. There is not a village in Switzerland, not a noble family of which he did not know the history. One day, in consequence of a wager, he was requested to give the pedigree of the sovereign counts of Bugey: he repeated their names one after another immediately, only he did not clearly recollect whether one of those he mentioned had been regent, or sovereign in his own right, and he seriously reproached himself for this defect of memory. Men of genius among the ancients were not subjected to that immense labour of erudition which is augmenting with every century, and their imaginations were not fatigued by study. It costs much more to acquire distinction in our days, and we owe some respect to the persevering toil which is necessary in order to gain possession of the subject under investigation.

The death of Müller, of whose character there are various opinions, is an irreparable loss to literature, and it seems as if more than one man were taken from us, when such talents are extinguished.*

* Amongst the disciples of Müller, the Baron de Hormayr, who wrote the Austrian Plutarch, should be consi-

Müller, who may be considered as the true classical historian of Germany, constantly read both the Greek and Latin authors in their original language; he cultivated literature and the fine arts as subservient to history. His unbounded erudition, far from diminishing his natural vivacity, was rather the foundation from whence his imagination took its flight, and the striking truth of his pictures was the result of the scrupulous fidelity with which they were drawn; but though he made admirable use of his learning, he was ignorant of the art of laying it aside when necessary. His history is much too long; he has not sufficiently compressed the different parts of it together. Details are necessary to give interest to the recital of events; but we ought to choose amongst those events such as are worthy to be recited.

The work of Müller is an eloquent chronicle; if, however, all histories were thus

dered as one of the first; we know that his history is composed, not from books, but from original manuscripts. Doctor Decarro, a learned Genevese settled at Vienna, by whose beneficent activity the discovery of vaccination has been carried into Asia, is about to publish a translation of these lives of the great men of Austria, which will excite great interest,

conducted, the life of man would be entirely spent in reading the lives of men. It were much to be wished, therefore, that Müller had not suffered himself to be led astray even by the extent of his knowledge. Nevertheless, readers who have the more time at their command, because they make a better use of it, will always feel new pleasure in perusing those noble annals of Switzerland. The preliminary chapters are chefs-d'œuvre of eloquence. No one has known better than Müller how to display in his writings the most energetic patriotism; and now he is no more, it is by his writings alone that we can appreciate him. He describes, with the skill of a painter, the scenes in which the principal events of the Helvetic confederation took place. It would be wrong to become the historian of a country we have never beheld. Situations, places, nature itself, are like the body of the picture; and facts, however well they may be related, have not the character of truth, if the external objects with which men are surrounded, are not, at the same time, brought forward to our view.

That erudition which led Müller to ascribe too much importance to every particular fact,

is extremely useful to him, when the object is an event really deserving of being animated by the powers of imagination. He then relates it, as if it had passed but yesterday, and knows how to give it all the interest which we should feel from a circumstance still present to us.

In history as well as in fictions, we ought, as much as possible, to leave to the reader the pleasure and opportunity of anticipating the characters of men and the progress of events. He is soon tired with what is told him, but he is delighted with what he himself discovers; and we assimilate literature to the interests of life, when we know how to awaken the anxiety of expectation by a mere recital; the judgment of the reader is exercised on a word, on an action, which makes him at once understand the character of a man, and often the spirit even of a nation or of a century.

The conspiracy of Rütli, as it is related in the History of Müller, excites very great interest. That peaceful valley, where men equally peaceable, resolved on the most perilous actions at the command of conscience; the calmness of their deliberation, the so-

lemnity of their oath; their ardour in the execution of it; an irrevocable determination founded on the will of man, while all without is changeable, what a picture! The imagery alone awakens thought; the heroes of this event, as the author relates it, are absorbed by the grandeur of their object. No general idea presents itself to their mind, no reflection occurs to diminish the firmness of the action, or the beauty of the recital.

At the battle of Granson, in which the duke of Burgundy attacked the small army of the Swiss Cantons, a simple trait gives the most affecting idea of those times and manners. Charles already occupied the heights, and thought himself master of the army which he saw at a distance on the plain; when all at once, at the rising of the sun, he perceived the Swiss, who, according to the custom of their fathers, fell on their knees before the battle to implore the protection of the Lord of Lords; the Burgundians thought they were kneeling thus, in order yield up their arms, and began to shout triumphantly; but all at once those Christian soldiers, fortified by prayer, rose from the ground, fell on their adversaries, and at length obtain the

victory of which their pious ardour had rendered them so worthy. Circumstances of this sort are often found in Müller's History, and his language affects the soul, even when what he says is not in itself pathetic; there is something grave, noble, and chaste in his style, which powerfully awakens the recollection of ancient times.

Müller had nevertheless much versatility; but genius assumes all forms without being on that account subjected to the charge of hypocrisy. It is what it appears to be, but it cannot always continue in the same disposition, and external circumstances give it different modifications. It is above all to the colouring of his style that Müller owes his power over the imagination; the old words which he makes use of so much to the purpose, give an air of Germanic faith which inspires us with confidence. Nevertheless he is wrong in attempting to unite the conciseness of Tacitus with the naïveté of the middle ages; these two imitations are inconsistent with each other. There is even no one but Müller with whom the old German phraseology sometimes succeeds; in every one else it is affectation. Sullust alone among the

ancient writers ventured to make use of the forms and language of a period anterior to his own; in general this sort of imitation is unnatural to us; nevertheless the chronicles of the middle ages were so familiar to Müller, that he often unintentionally wrote in the same style. Those expressions must certainly have been natural to him since they inspire all that he wished us to feel.

In reading Müller we have pleasure in believing that he possessed at least some of the virtues which he knew so well how to appreciate. His last will, which has been just published, is undoubtedly a proof of his disinterestedness. He leaves no fortune, but directs his manuscripts to be sold in order to pay his debts. He adds, that if the produce is sufficient to discharge them, he bequeaths his watch to his servant, "who will not," he says, "receive without tender emotion, the watch which he has daily wound up for twenty years." The poverty of a man possessed of such distinguished talents is always an honourable circumstance of his life: a thousandth part of the genius which confers a high literary reputation would certainly be sufficient to ensure the success of all the cal-

culations of covetousness. It is a fine thing to devote one's talents to the pursuit of fame, and we always feel esteem for those who ardently aspire after an object which lies beyond the grave.

CHAPTER XXX.

Herder.

THE men of literature in Germany, as a united body, form in many respects the most respectable assemblage which the enlightened world can present to us, and among these, Herder deserves a distinguished place: his mind, his genius, and his morality united, have rendered his life illustrious. His writings may be considered in three different points of view, those of history, literature, and theology. He was much occupied in the study of antiquity in general, and of the oriental languages in particular. His book entitled "the Philosophy of History" has more fascination in it than almost any other German production. We do not indeed find that it contains the same depth of political observation as the work written by Montesquieu on the greatness and decline of the Romans; but as Herder's object was to penetrate the genius of the earliest

periods of time, perhaps the quality he most eminently possesed, which was imagination, proved more serviceable to him in that pursuit than any other would have done: that sort of torch is necessary when we walk in darkness: Herder's various chapters on Persepolis and Babylon, on the Hebrews and Egyptians, form a delightful kind of reading; it seems as if we were walking in the midst of the old world with an historical poet, who touches the ruins with his wand, and erects anew before our eyes, all the fallen edifices.

In Germany, so extensive a degree of information is expected even from men of the greatest genius, that some critics have accused Herder of not possessing a sufficient depth of learning. But what strikes us, on the contrary, is the variety of his knowledge: all the languages were familiar to him, and his "Essay on the Poetry of the Hebrews," is the work in which he most readily discovers how far he could adopt the spirit of foreign nations. The genius of a prophetic people, with whom poetical inspiration was an emanation from the Deity, was never better expressed. The wandering life of that nation, the manners of its people, the thoughts of which they were

capable, the imagery habitual to it, are all pointed out by Herder with great sagacity. By the help of the most ingenious combinations, he endeavours to give us an idea of the symmetry of Hebrew versification, of that return of the same sentiment and of the same image in different terms of which every stanza offers us an example. Sometimes he compares this striking regularity to two rows of pearls which surround the hair of a beautiful woman. "Art and nature," says he, "through all their varieties, still preserve an "astonishing uniformity." Unless we were able to read the Hebrew Psalms in the original language, it is impossible to acquire a better idea of the charm with which they are accompanied, than by what Herder says of them. His imagination was straitened in the countries of the west; he delighted in breathing the perfumes of Asia, and in transfusing into his works the pure incense which his soul had collected.—It was he who first made Spanish and Portugueze poetry known in Germany; the translations of W. Schlegel have since naturalized them. Herder published a collection entitled "Popular Songs." It contains ballads and detached pieces, on

which the national character and imagination of the people are strongly impressed. We may study in them that natural poetry which precedes cultivation. Cultivated literature becomes so speedily factitious, that it is good, now and then, to have recourse to the origin of all poetry, that is to say, to the impression made by nature on man before he had analysed both the universe and himself. The flexibility of the German language alone, perhaps, admits a translation of those naïvetés peculiar to that of different countries, without which we cannot enter into the spirit of popular poetry; the words in those poems have in themselves a certain grace, which affects us like a flower we have before seen, like an air that we have heard in our childhood: these peculiar impressions contain not only the secrets of the art, but those of the soul, from which art originally derived them. The Germans, in literature, analyse their sensations to the very utmost, even to those delicate shades which no language can convey to our ideas; and we may reproach them with attaching themselves too much, in every respect, to the endeavour of making us comprehend what can never be expressed.

I shall speak, in the fourth part of this work, of Herder's theological writings; history and literature are often found united in them. A man of so sincere a heart as Herder must naturally mingle religion with all his thoughts, and all his thoughts with religion. It has been said, that his writings resemble an animated conversation: it is true that he has not made use of that methodical form in his works, which is given to books in general. It was under the porticos, and in the gardens of the Academy, that Plato explained to his disciples the system of the intellectual world. We find in Herder that noble negligence of genius ever impatient to acquire new ideas. What we call a well made book is a modern invention. The discovery of the art of printing has rendered all the apparatus of logic, divisions, recapitulations, &c. necessary to us. The greatest number of ancient works of philosophy, are treatises or dialogues, which we consider as written conversations. Montaigne also gave himself up to the natural course of his thoughts. To be allowed such a privilege, however, we should possess a decided superiority of intellect. Order supplies the want of that superiority; for if

mediocrity were thus to deviate at random, we should commonly be brought back to the point from which we begun, with the fatigue of having taken many a wearisome step; but a man of genius interests us the more, by shewing himself as he is, and by making his books appear rather as extemporaneous effusions than laboured compositions.

Herder possessed, it is said, admirable powers of conversation, and from his writings we are sensible that it must have been so. We also perceive from them, what indeed all his friends attest the truth of, that there never was a better man. When literary genius inspires those who do not know us, with a disposition to love us, it is that gift of heaven from which on earth we gather the most delightful fruit.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Of the Literary Treasures of Germany, and of its most renowned Critics, A. W. and F. Schlegel.

In the picture which I have now given of German literature, I have endeavoured to point out the principal works; but I have been obliged to omit naming a great number of men, whose writings, being less known, conduce more to the instruction of those who read them, than to the reputation of the authors themselves.

Treatises on the fine arts, works of erudition and philosophy, though they do not immediately belong to literature, must however be counted amongst its treasures. There is in Germany a fund of ideas and knowledge, which the other nations of Europe will not for a long time be able to exhaust.

The poetical genius, if Heaven ever restores it to us, may also receive a happy impulse from the love of nature, of arts and philosophy, which is kindled in the countries of

Germany; but at least, I dare affirm, that any man who now wishes to devote himself to a serious work of whatever sort, whether history, philosophy, or antiquities, cannot excuse himself from becoming acquainted with the German writers, who have been occupied with the study of those subjects.

France may boast of a great number of learned men of the first rank, but they have seldom united knowledge and political sagacity, while in Germany they are now almost inseparable. Those who plead in favour of ignorance, as a pledge of grace, mention many very sensible men who have had no instruction; but they forget that those men have deeply studied the human heart, such as it shews itself in the world, and that their ideas are derived from that source. But if those men, learned in society, would judge of literature without being acquainted with it, they would be as tiresome as citizens are when they talk of the court.

When I began the study of German literature, it seemed as if I was entering on a new sphere, where the most striking light was thrown on all that I had before perceived only in a confused manner. For some time

past, little has been read in France except memoirs and novels, and it is not wholly from frivolity, that we are become less capable of more serious reading, but because the events of the revolution have accustomed us to value nothing but the knowledge of men and things: we find in German books, even on the most abstract subjects, that kind of interest which confers their value upon good novels, and which is excited by the knowledge which they teach us of our own hearts. The peculiar character of German literature, is to refer every thing to an interior existence; and as that is the mystery of mysteries, it awakens an unbounded curiosity.

Before we proceed to philosophy, which always makes a part of learning in countries where the empire of literature is free and powerful, I will say a few words on what may be considered as the legislation of that empire, I mean criticism. There is no branch of German literature which has been carried to a greater extent, and as in certain cities there are more physicians than sick people, there are sometimes in Germany more critics than authors: but the analyses of Lessing, who was the creator of style in German prose,

are made in such a manner, that they may themselves be considered as works.

Kant, Goëthe, J. de Müller, the greatest German writers of every various kind, have inserted in the periodical pieces, what they call *recensions* of different publications, and these *recensions* contain the most profound philosophical theory, and positive knowledge. Amongst the younger writers, Schiller and the two Schlegels have shewn themselves very superior to all other critics. Schiller is the first among the disciples of Kant, who applied his philosophy to literature; and indeed, to judge from the soul, of exterior objects, or from exterior objects to know what passes in the soul, is so different a progress, that all connected with either, must be sensible of it. Schiller has written two treatises "on the naïf and the sentimental," in which, genius unconscious of its own powers, and genius which is self-observant, are analysed with great sagacity; but in his "Essay on "Grace and Dignity," and in his letters on the *Æsthetic*, that is to say, the theory of the beautiful, there is too much of metaphysics. When we mean to speak of that enjoyment of the arts of which all men are susceptible,

we should dwell on the impressions they have received, instead of permitting the use of abstract forms, which make us lose the trace of those impressions. Schiller was a man of literature by his genius, and a philosopher by his inclination to reflection; his prose writings border on the confines of the two regions; but he often treads a little forward on the highest, and returning incessantly to what is more abstract in theory, he disdains the application as a useless consequence of the principles he has laid down.

Animated descriptions of the chefs-d'œuvre of literature give much more interest to criticism than general ideas which skim over all subjects without characterizing any. Metaphysics may be termed the science of what is immutable; but all that is subjected to the course of time, is explained only by the mixture of facts and reflections: the Germans would attain complete theories, independent of circumstances, on all subjects; but as that is impossible, we must not give up facts from a fear lest they should circumscribe ideas; and examples alone in theory, as well as in practice, engrave precepts deeply in the memory.

The quintessence of thoughts which some German works present to us, does not, like that of flowers, concentrate the most odoriferous perfumes; on the contrary, we may say with greater truth, that it is only a cold remnant of emotions that were full of life. We might, however, extract from those works a multitude of very interesting observations; but they are confounded with each other. The author, by great exertion of mind, leads his readers to that point where his ideas are too fine and delicate for him to attempt transmitting them to others.

The writings of A. W. Schlegel are less abstracted than those of Schiller; as his knowledge of literature is uncommon even in Germany, he is led continually to application by the pleasure which he finds in comparing different languages and different poems with each other; so general a point of view ought almost to be considered as infallible, if partiality did not sometimes impair it; but this partiality is not of an arbitrary kind, and I will point out both the progress and aim of it; nevertheless, as there are subjects in which it is not perceived, it is of those that I shall first speak.

W. Schlegel has given a course of dramatic literature at Vienna, which comprizes every thing remarkable that has been composed for the theatre from the time of the Grecians to our own days; it is not a barren nomenclature of the works of the various authors, he seizes the spirit of their different sorts of literature, with all the imagination of a poet; we are sensible that to produce such consequences extraordinary studies are required; but learning is not perceived in this work except by his perfect knowledge of the chefs-d'œuvre of composition. In a few pages we reap the fruit of the labour of a whole life; every opinion formed by the author, every epithet given to the writers of whom he speaks, is beautiful and just, concise and animated. W. Schlegel has found the art of treating the finest pieces of poetry as so many wonders of nature, and of painting them in lively colours which do not injure the justness of the outline; for we cannot repeat too often, that imagination, far from being an enemy to truth, brings it forward more than any other faculty of the mind, and all those who depend upon it as an excuse for indefinite terms or exaggerated expressions, are at

least as destitute of poetry as of good sense.

An analysis of the principles on which both tragedy and comedy are founded, is treated in W. Schlegel's course of dramatic literature with much depth of philosophy; this kind of merit is often found among the German writers; but Schlegel has no equal in the art of inspiring his own admiration; in general he shews himself attached to a simple taste, sometimes bordering on rusticity, but he deviates from his usual opinions in favour of the opinions of the inhabitants of the south. Their *jeux de mots* and their *concetti* are not the objects of his censure; he detests the affectation which owes its existence to the spirit of society, but that which is excited by the luxury of imagination pleases him in poetry as the profusion of colours and perfumes would do in nature. Schlegel, after having acquired a great reputation by his translation of Shakspeare, became equally enamoured of Calderon, but with a very different sort of attachment to that with which Shakspeare had inspired him; for while the English author is deep and gloomy in his knowledge of the human heart,

the Spanish poet gives himself up with pleasure and delight to the beauty of life, to the sincerity of faith, and to all the brilliancy of those virtues which derive their colouring from the sunshine of the soul.

I was at Vienna when W. Schlegel gave his public course of lectures. I expected only good sense and instruction where the object was only to convey information; I was astonished to hear a critic as eloquent as an orator, and who, far from falling upon defects, which are the eternal food of mean and little jealousy, sought only the means of reviving a creative genius.

Spanish literature is but little known, and it was the subject of one of the finest passages delivered during the sitting at which I attended. W. Schlegel gave us a picture of that chivalrous nation, whose poets were all warriors, and whose warriors were poets. He mentioned that count Ercilla, "who composed his poem of the Araucana in a tent, as now on the shores of the ocean, now at the foot of the Cordilleras while he made war on the revolted savages." Garcilasso, one of the descendants of the Incas, wrote poems on love on the ruins of Carthage, and perished

at the siege of Tunis. Cervantes was dangerously wounded at the battle of Lepanto; Lope de Vega escaped by miracle at the defeat of the invincible Armada; and Calderon served as an intrepid soldier in the wars of Flanders and Italy.

Religion and war were more frequently united amongst the Spaniards than in any other nation; it was they, who, by perpetual combats, drove out the Moors from the bosom of their country, and who may be considered as the van-guard of European christendom; they conquered their churches from the Arabians, an act of their worship was a trophy for their arms, and their triumphant religion, sometimes carried to fanaticism, was allied to the sentiment of honour, and gave to their character an impressive dignity. That gravity tinctured with imagination, even that gaiety which loses nothing of what is serious in the warmest affections, shews itself in Spanish literature, which is wholly composed of "fictions and of poetry, of which religion, "love, and warlike exploits are constantly "the object. It might be said, that when the "new world was discovered, the treasures of "another hemisphere contributed to enrich

" the imagination as much as the state; and " that in the empire of poetry as well as in " that of Charles V, the sun never ceased to " enlighten the horizon."

All who heard W. Schlegel, were much struck with this picture, and the German language, which he spoke with elegance, added depth of thought and affecting expression to those high-sounding Spanish names, which can never be pronounced without presenting to our imaginations the orange trees of the kingdom of Grenada, and the palaces of its Moorish sovereigns.*

We may compare W. Schlegel's manner of speaking of poetry, to that of Winkelmann in describing statues; and it is only by such a method of estimating talents, that it is honourable to be a critic: every artist or

* William Schlegel, whom I here mention as the first literary critic of Germany, is the author of a French pamphlet lately published under the title of " Reflections " on the Continental System." This same W. Schlegel printed a few years ago at Paris, a comparison between the Phædra of Euripides and that of Racine: it made a great noise among the literary people of that place; but no one could deny that W. Schlegel, though a German, wrote French well enough to be fully competent to the task of criticizing Racine.

professional man can point out faults and inaccuracies which ought to be avoided, but the ability to discover genius and to admire it, is almost equal to the possession of genius itself.

Frederic Schlegel being much engaged in philosophical pursuits, devoted himself less exclusively to literature than his brother; yet the piece he wrote on the intellectual culture of the Greeks and Romans, contains in small compass perceptions and conclusions of the first order. F. Schlegel has more originality of genius than almost any other celebrated man in Germany; but far from depending on that originality, though it promised him much success, he endeavoured to assist it by extensive study. It is a great proof of our respect for the human species, when we dare not address it from the suggestions of our own minds, without having first conscientiously examined into all that has been left to us by our predecessors as an inheritance. The Germans, in those acquired treasures of the human mind, are true proprietors: those who depend on their own natural understandings alone, are mere sojourners in comparison with them.

After having done justice to the uncommon talents of the two Schlegels, we will now examine in what that partiality consists of which they are accused, and from which it is certain all their writings are not exempt. They are evidently prepossessed in favour of the middle ages, and the opinions that were then prevalent; chivalry without spot, unbounded faith, and unstudied poetry, appear to them inseparable; and they apply themselves to all that may enable them to direct the minds and understandings of others to the same preference. W. Schlegel expresses his admiration for the middle ages in several of his writings, and particularly in two stanzas of which I will now give a translation.

"In those distinguished ages Europe was
"sole and undivided, and the soil of that
"universal country was fruitful in those ge-
"nerous thoughts which are calculated to
"serve as guides through life and in death.
"Knighthood converted combatants into
"brethren in arms: they fought in defence
"of the same faith; the same love inspired
"all hearts, and the poetry which sung that
"alliance, expressed the same sentiment in
"different languages."

"Alas! the noble energy of ancient times "is lost: our age is the inventor of a narrow- "minded wisdom, and what weak men have "no ability to conceive is in their eyes only "a chimera; surely nothing truly great can "succeed if undertaken with a grovelling "heart. Our times, alas! no longer know "either faith or love; how then can hope be "expected to remain with them?"

Opinions, whose tendency is so strongly marked, must necessarily affect impartiality of judgment on works of art: without doubt, as I have continually repeated during the whole course of this work, it is much to be desired that modern literature should be founded on our history and our religion; it does not however follow that the literary productions of the middle ages should be considered as absolutely good. The energetic simplicity, the pure and loyal character which is displayed in them, interests us warmly; but in the other hand, the knowledge of antiquity and the progress of civilization have given us advantages which are not to be despised. The object is not to trace back the arts to remote times, but to unite, as much as we can, all the various qua-

lities which have been developed in the human mind at different periods.

The Schlegels have been strongly accused of not doing justice to French literature: there are however no writers who have spoken with more enthusiasm of the genius of our troubadours, and of that French chivalry which was unequalled in Europe, when it united in the highest degree, spirit and loyalty, grace and frankness, courage and gaiety, the most affecting simplicity with the most ingenuous candour; but the German critics affirm that those distinguished traits of the French character were effaced during the course of the reign of Louis XIV; literature, they say, in ages which are called classical, loses in originality what it gains in correctness; they have attacked our poets, particularly, in various ways, and with great strength of argument. The general spirit of those critics is the same with that of Rousseau in his letter against French music. They think they discover in many of our tragedies, that kind of pompous affectation, of which Rousseau accuses Lully and Rameau, and they affirm that the same taste which gives the preference to Coypel

and Boucher in painting, and to the Chevalier Bernini in sculpture, forbids in poetry that rapturous ardour which alone renders it a divine enjoyment; in short, they are tempted to apply to our manner of conceiving and of loving the fine arts, the verses so frequently quoted from Corneille:

"Othon à la princesse a fait un compliment,
"Plus en homme d'esprit qu'en véritable amant."

W. Schlegel pays due homage however to most of our great authors; but what he chiefly endeavours to prove, is, that from the middle of the 17th century, a constrained and affected manner has prevailed throughout Europe, and that this prevalence has made us lose those bold flights of genius which animated both writers and artists in the revival of literature. In the pictures and bas-reliefs where Louis XIV. is sometimes represented as Jupiter, and sometimes as Hercules, he is naked, or clothed only with the skin of a lion, but always with a great wig on his head. The writers of the new school tell us that this great wig may be applied to the physiognomy of the fine arts in the 17th century: an affected sort of politeness, derived from facti-

tious greatness, is always to be discovered in them.

It is interesting to examine the subject in this point of view, in spite of the innumerable objections which may be opposed to it; it is however certain that these German critics have succeeded in the object aimed at, as, of all writers since Lessing, they have most essentially contributed to discredit the imitation of French literature in Germany; but from the fear of adopting French taste, they have not sufficiently improved that of their own country, and have often rejected just and striking observations, merely because they had before been made by our writers.

They know not how to make a book in Germany, and scarcely ever adopt that methodical order which classes ideas in the mind of the reader; it is not therefore because the French are impatient, but because their judgment is just and accurate, that this defect is so tiresome to them; in German poetry fictions are not delineated with those strong and precise outlines which ensure the effect, and the uncertainty of the imagination corresponds to the obscurity of the thought. In short, if taste be found wanting in those strange and

vulgar pleasantries which constitute what is called *comic* in some of their works, it is not because they are natural, but because the affectation of energy is at least as ridiculous as that of gracefulness. "I am *making* myself "lively," said a German as he jumped out of window: when we attempt to *make* ourselves any thing, we are nothing: we should have recourse to the good taste of the French to secure us from the excessive exaggeration of some German authors, as on the other hand we should apply to the solidity and depth of the Germans to guard us from the dogmatic frivolity of some individuals amongst the men of literature in France.

Different nations ought to serve as guides to each other, and all would do wrong to deprive themselves of the information they may mutually receive and impart. There is something very singular in the difference which subsists between nations; the climate, the aspect of nature, the language, the government, and above all the events of history, which have in themselves powers more extraordinary than all the others united, all combine to produce those diversities; and no man, however superior soever he may be, can guess

at that which is naturally developed in the mind of him who inhabits another soil and breathes another air: we should do well then, in all foreign countries, to welcome foreign thoughts and foreign sentiments, for hospitality of this sort makes the fortune of him who exercises it.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Of the Fine Arts in Germany.

The Germans in general understand the arts better than they practise them; no sooner is an impression made on their minds, than they draw from it a number of ideas. They boast much of mystery, but it is with the purpose of revealing it, and no sort of originality can be shewn in Germany without exciting a general endeavour to explain from whence it is derived; this is a great disadvantage, particularly with respect to the arts, where all is sensation; they are analyzed before this inspiration is felt, and it is in vain afterwards to say, it was wrong to analyze them, we must denounce the practice, for we have tasted the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and the innocence of genius is lost.

I certainly do not recommend, with respect to the arts, that ignorance which I have always condemned in literature; but we should distinguish the studies which relate to the practice of the arts, from those whose only object is

the theory of genius; these carried too far, stifle invention; we are perplexed by the recollection of all that has been said on the subject of every different chef-d'œuvre, and think we perceive between ourselves and the object we mean to describe, a number of treatises on painting and sculpture, on the ideal and the real, till as artists, we feel that we are no longer in immediate communion with nature. Without doubt the spirit of those various treatises is encouragement; but genius is wearied by being brought too forward, as on the other hand it is extinguished by too much restraint; and in all that relates to the imagination, there is required so happy a combination of obstacles and facilities, that ages may pass away before we arrive exactly at the point most favourable for the display of the human mind in its highest degree of perfection.

Before the period of the reformation, the Germans had a school of painting which that of Italy would not have disdained. Albert Durer, Lucas Cranach, and Holbein, have in their manner of painting some affinity with the predecessors of Raphaël, Perugino, Andrea Mantegno, &c. Holbein approaches nearer to

Leonardo da Vinci; there is however in general more hardness in the German than in the Italian school, but not less expression and collectedness in the countenances. The painters in the fifteenth century had very little knowledge of the means which facilitate the practice of their art, but simplicity and modesty are every where displayed in their works; we see in them no pretensions to grand effect, we perceive only the expression of that strong and vivid emotion, for which all men of genius endeavour to find a language, that they may not leave the world without imparting a portion of their soul to their contemporaries.

In the paintings of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the folds of the drapery are quite straight, the head-dresses a little stiff, the attitudes very simple; but there is something in the expression of the figures which we are never tired of contemplating. The pictures on scriptural subjects, produce an impression like that which we feel from the Psalms, where poetry and piety are so charmingly united.

The second, and the finest epoch of the art of painting, was that in which the painters preserved the truth of the middle ages, and

added to it all the more recently acquired splendour of the art: nothing among the Germans corresponds to the age of Leo X. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, on to the middle of the eighteenth, the fine arts almost every where fell into a singular decay; taste degenerated into affectation: Winckelmann then exerted the greatest influence not only over his own country, but over the rest of Europe; and it was his writings which directed the minds of different artists to the study and admiration of the monuments of antiquity: he was better skilled in sculpture than in poetry; and he therefore led painters into the practice of placing coloured statues in their pictures rather than the animated forms of living nature. Painting also lost much of its charm by being so nearly allied to sculpture; the illusion necessary to the one is directly contrary to the immoveable and decided forms of the other. When painters take their models exclusively from the remains of ancient beauty, as it is only in statues that it can be discovered, we may address to them the reproach which has been applied to modern classical literature, that it is not from the inspiration of their own minds, that they produce the effects of their art.

Mengs, a German painter, has given us many philosophical thoughts, in his writings, on the subject of his art: he was the friend of Winckelmann, and partook in his admiration of the antique; but he nevertheless avoided the faults for which the painters, formed by the writings of Winckelmann, have generally been censured, and which are mostly confined to their copying the chefs-d'œuvre of antiquity. Mengs had even taken Corregio for his model, whose pictures, of all others, are the farthest removed from any resemblance to sculpture, and whose chiaró scuro recals to our minds the vague, but delightful impressions of melody.

The German artists had, almost all of them, adopted the opinions of Winckelmann, till the period when the new literary school also extended its influence over the fine arts. Goëthe, whose universal genius meets us every where, has shewn in his writings, that he comprehends the true spirit of painting much better than Winckelmann; nevertheless, convinced like him, that subjects drawn from the Christian religion are not favourable to the art, he endeavours to revive our enthusiasm for ancient mythology, an attempt which it is impossible

to succeed in; perhaps, with respect to the fine arts, we are not capable of being either Christians or Pagans: but at whatever period a creative imagination shall again spring up from amongst men, it will assuredly not be in an imitation of the ancients, that its effects will be perceived.

The new school maintains the same system in the fine arts, as in literature, and affirms that Christianity is the source of all modern genius; the writers of this school also characterize, in a new manner, all that in Gothic architecture agrees with the religious sentiments of Christians. It does not follow however from this, that the moderns can and ought to construct Gothic churches; neither art nor nature admit of repetition: it is only of consequence to us, in the present silence of genius, to lay aside the contempt which has been thrown on all the conceptions of the middle ages; it certainly does not suit us to adopt them, but nothing is more injurious to the developement of genius, than to consider as barbarous every thing that is original.

I have already said, in speaking of Germany, that there are very few modern buildings which are at all remarkable; in the north, we see

nothing in general but Gothic edifices, and the dispositions of soul which they tend to excite are encouraged both by nature and poetry. Görres, a German writer, has given an interesting description of an ancient church. "We "see," said he, "figures of knights kneeling "on a tomb-stone with their hands joined "together; above them are placed some wonderful curiosities from Asia, which are intended to attest, as so many dumb witnesses, "the voyages of the deceased to the Holy "Land. The dark arches of the church cover "those who rest beneath them with their "shade; we might almost imagine ourselves "in the midst of a forest, the branches and "leaves of which have been petrified by death, "so that they will no longer move or be "agitated, when succeeding ages, like the "midnight storm, shall roll through their "lengthened vaults. The church resounds "with the majestic tones of the organ; inscriptions in letters of brass, half destroyed "by the humid vapours of time, confusedly "indicate those great actions which are now "become fabulous, after having been so long "considered as incontestably true."

In speaking of the arts in Germany, we are

led to mention writers rather than artists. The Germans are, in every respect, stronger in theory than in practice, and northern climates are so little favourable to those arts which strike our eyes, that we might almost be induced to think, the spirit of reflection was bestowed on them merely because their inhabitants should be enabled to observe and appreciate the beauties of the south.

There are many galleries of pictures and collections of drawings in Germany, which indicate a love of the arts in all ranks of people. In the houses of the nobility and most distinguished men of literature, there are very fine copies of the chefs-d'œuvre of antiquity; that of Göethe is remarkable in this respect; his object is not merely the pleasure which is felt from the sight of fine statues and pictures, he thinks both the genius and the soul are affected by it. "I should be a better man," said he, "if I had always under my eyes the head of "the Olympian Jupiter, which was so much "admired by the ancients."—Several distinguished painters have established themselves at Dresden; the chefs-d'œuvre which adorn the Gallery are the objects of attraction, and excite both skill and emulation. The Virgin of

Raphaël with two children gazing on her, is in itself a treasure of art; there is in this figure an elevation and a purity which is the perfect ideal of religion and inward fortitude. The symmetry of the features is in this picture only a symbol; the long garments, as an expression of modesty, render the countenance still more interesting; and the physiognomy, even more admirable than the features, is like supreme beauty manifesting itself in that which is terrestrial. The Christ, who is in the arms of his mother, seems at most about two years of age; but the painter has wonderfully expressed the powerful energy of the divine being, in a countenance as yet scarcely formed. The looks of the angelic children who are placed at the bottom of the picture, are delightful; the innocence of that age, alone, can appear charming by the side of celestial candour; their astonishment at the sight of the Virgin, beaming with holiness and beauty, does not resemble the surprise which men might feel; they appear as if they adored her with confidence, because they acknowledge in her, an inhabitant of that heaven from which they had just descended.

The Night of Corregio is, next to the Virgin of Raphaël, the finest chef-d'œuvre in the

Dresden Gallery. The adoration of the shepherds has often been well represented; but as novelty of subject goes but a little way in the pleasure we receive from painting, it is sufficient to observe the manner in which Correggio's picture is conceived, in order to admire it: it is in the middle of the night that the child is placed on the knees of its mother, and that it receives the homage of the astonished shepherds; the light which beams from the holy aureola with which his head is surrounded, has something in it truly sublime; the personages placed in the back-ground of the picture, and far from the divine infant, are still in darkness; an emblem of the obscurity with which human life was environed, before it was enlightened by revelation.

Amongst the various pictures of modern artists at Dresden, I recollect a head of Dante, which in character was a little like the figure of Ossian in the fine picture of Gerard. This analogy is a happy one. Dante and the son of Fingal may take each other by the hand through successive ages, and through the clouds that hang over them.

A picture of Hartmann's represents the visit of Magdalèn, and the two other Mary's,

to the sepulchre of Jesus Christ; the angel appears to announce to them that he is risen; the open tomb, which no longer encloses any mortal remains, and those women of most admirable beauty lifting their eyes towards heaven to behold him whom they have just been seeking in the shades of the sepulchre, form a painting at once picturesque and dramatic.

Schick, another German artist, now settled at Rome, has, since his residence in that place, composed a picture which represents the first sacrifice of Noah after the deluge; nature, revived by the waters, seems to have acquired a new freshness; the animals appear familiarized with the patriarch and his children, as having escaped together from the flood. The verdure, the flowers, and the sky are painted in lively and natural colours, which recal the sensations excited by the landscapes of the east. Several other artists endeavoured, like Schick, to follow in painting, the new system introduced, or rather revived, in literary poetry; but the arts require the assistance of riches, and wealth is dispersed through the different cities of Germany: and besides this, the greatest progress which has hitherto been made

in that country, results from properly understanding, and copying in their true spirit, the works of the ancient masters: original genius has not yet decidedly displayed itself.

Sculpture has not been cultivated with much success amongst the Germans; in the first place, because they want the marble which renders the chefs-d'œuvre of the art immortal, and also, because they have no just idea of that delicacy and grace of attitude and gesture which gymnastic exercises and dancing alone, can render natural and easy to us; nevertheless, a Dane, Thorwaldsen, educated in Germany, is at present the rival of Canova at Rome, and his Jason resembles that which Pindar describes as the model of manly beauty; a fleece lies on his left arm; he holds a lance in his hand, and the inactivity of strength characterizes the hero. I have already said that sculpture in general loses much by the neglect of dancing; the only phænomenon of that art in Germany is Ida Brunn, a young girl whose situation in life precludes her from adopting it as a profession; she has received from nature and from her mother a wonderful talent of representing, by simple attitudes, the most affecting pictures, or the most beautiful statues;

her dancing is a course of transient chefs-d'œuvre, every one of which we should wish to fix for ever: it is true that the mother of Ida had before conceived in her imagination all that her daughter so admirably presents to our eyes. The poetry of Madame Brunn displays a thousand new treasures, both in art and nature, which, from inattention, had been before unnoticed.

I saw the young Ida, when yet a child, represent Althea ready to burn the brand on which the life of her son, Meleager, depended; she expressed without words, the grief, the struggles, the terrible resolution of the mother; her animated looks, without doubt, made us understand what was passing in her heart; but the art of varying her gestures, and the skilful manner in which she folded round her the purple mantle with which she was clothed, produced at least as much effect as her countenance itself; she often remained a considerable time in the same attitude, and at such times, a painter could not have invented any thing finer than the picture which she extemporaneously presented to us; a talent of this sort is unique. I think nevertheless, that pantomimical dances would succeed better in

Germany, than those which consist entirely, as in France, of bodily gracefulness and agility.

The Germans excel in instrumental music; the knowledge it demands, and the patience necessary to execute it well, are quite natural to them; some of their composers have also much variety and fruitfulness of imagination; I shall make but one objection to their genius as musicians; they put too much *mind* in their works; they reflect too much on what they are doing. In the fine arts there should be more instinct than thought: the German composers follow too exactly the sense of the words; this, it is true, is a great merit, in the opinion of those who love words better than music, and besides, we cannot deny that a disagreement between the sense of the one, and the impression of the other, would be offensive: but the Italians, who are truly the musicians of nature, make the air and words conform to each other only in a general manner. In ballads and vaudevilles, as there is not much music, the little that there is may be subjected to the words; but in the great effects of melody, we should endeavour to reach the soul by an immediate sensation.

Those who are not admirers of painting, considered in itself, attach great importance to the subject of a picture; they wish, in contemplating it, to feel the impressions which are produced by dramatic representation: it is the same in music; when its powers are but feebly felt, we expect that it should faithfully conform to every variation of the words: but when the whole soul is affected by it, every thing, except the music itself, is importunate, and distracts the attention: provided there be no contrast between the poetry and the music, we give ourselves up to that art which should always predominate over the others: for the delightful reverie into which it throws us, annihilates all thoughts which may be expressed by words; and music awakening in us the sentiment of infinity, every thing which tends to particularize the object of melody, must necessarily diminish its effect.

Gluck, whom the Germans, with reason, reckon among their men of genius, has adapted his airs to the words in a wonderful manner, and in several of his operas he has rivalled the poet by the expression of his music. When Alcestis has determined to die for Admetus, and that this sacrifice, secretly offered to the

Gods, has restored her husband to life, the contrast of the joyful airs, which celebrate the convalescence of the king, and the stifled groans and lamentations of the queen, who is condemned to quit him, has a fine tragical effect. Orestes, in the Iphigenia in Tauris, says, " serenity is restored to my soul," and the air which he sings expresses the sentiment, but its accompaniment is mournful and agitated. The musicians, astonished at this contrast, endeavoured in playing it, to soften the accompaniment, when Gluck angrily cried out: " You must not hearken to Orestes, he " tells you he is calm, but he lies." Poussin, in painting the dance of the shepherdesses, places in the landscape the tomb of a young girl, on which is inscribed: " And I also was " an Arcadian." There is thought in this kind of conception of the arts, as well as in the ingenious combination, of Gluck; but the arts are superior to thought: their language is colour, forms, or sounds. If we could form an imagination of the expressions of which our souls would be susceptible without the knowledge of words, we should have a more just idea of the effect to be produced by painting and music.

Of all musicians, perhaps Mozart has shewn most skill in the talent of "marrying" the music to the words. In his operas, particularly in "the Banquet of the Statue," he makes us sensible of all the gradations of dramatic representation; the songs are gay and lively, while the strange and loud accompaniment seems to point out the fantastic and gloomy subject of the piece. This ingenious alliance of the musician and poet, gives us also a sort of pleasure, but it is a pleasure which springs from *reflection*, and *that* does not belong to the wonderful sphere of the arts.

At Vienna, I heard Haydn's Creation performed by four hundred musicians; it was an entertainment worthy to be given in honour of the great work which it celebrated; but the skill of Haydn was sometimes even injurious to his talent; with those words of the Bible, "God said let there be light, and there "was light," the accompaniment of the instruments was at first very soft, so as scarcely to be heard, then all at once they broke out together with a terrible noise, as if to express the sudden burst of light, which occasioned a witty remark, "that at the appearance of light it was "necessary to stop one's ears."

In several other passages of the Creation, the same labour of mind may often be censured; the music creeps slowly when the serpents are created; it becomes lively again with the singing of birds, and in the Seasons, by Haydn also, these allusions are still more multiplied. Effects thus prepared beforehand are in music what the Italians term *concetti:* without doubt, certain combinations of harmony may remind us of the wonders of nature, but their analogies have nothing to do with imitation, which is nothing more than a factitious amusement. The real resemblance of the fine arts to each other, and also to nature, depends on sentiments of the same sort which they excite in our souls by various means. Imitation and expression differ extremely in the fine arts: it is pretty generally agreed, I believe, that imitative music should be laid aside; but there are still two different ways of considering that of expression; some wish to discover in it a translation of the words; others, and the Italians are of this number, are contented with a general connection of the situations of the piece with the intention of the airs, and seek the pleasures of the art, entirely in the art itself. The music

of the Germans is more varied than that of the Italians, and in this respect, perhaps, is not so good; the mind is condemned to variety, its poverty is perhaps the cause of it; but the arts, like *sentiment*, have an admirable mono*tony*, that of which one would willingly make an everlasting moment.

Church music is not so fine in Germany as in Italy, because the instrumental part is too powerful. To him who has heard the Miserere, performed at Rome by voices only, all instrumental music, not excepting that of the Chapel at Dresden, appears terrestrial. Violins and trumpets make part of the Orchestra at that place during divine service, and the music is consequently much more warlike than religious; the contrast between the lively impression it occasions, and the recollections suited to the church, is not agreeable: we should not bring animated life to the foot of the tomb; military music leads us to sacrifice existence, but not to detach us from it. The music of the Chapel at Vienna also deserves praise; of all the arts, music is that which the people of Vienna most value; and this leads us to hope that at some future day, they will also become poets, for in spite of their

taste, which is a little prosaic, whoever really loves music, is an enthusiast, without knowing it, of all the sentiments which music recalls to our mind. I heard at Vienna the Requiem composed by Mozart, a few days before his death, and which was sung in the church at his funeral; it is not sufficiently solemn for the situation, and we still find in it, as in all his preceding compositions, many ingenious passages; what is there, however, more affecting and impressive than the idea of a man of superior genius thus celebrating his own obsequies, inspired at the same time by the sentiment of his death and of his immortality! The recollections of life ought to decorate the tomb, the arms of a warrior are usually suspended on it, and the chefs-d'œuvre of art cause a peculiarly solemn impression in the temple where the remains of the artist are consigned to repose.

END OF VOLUME II.

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